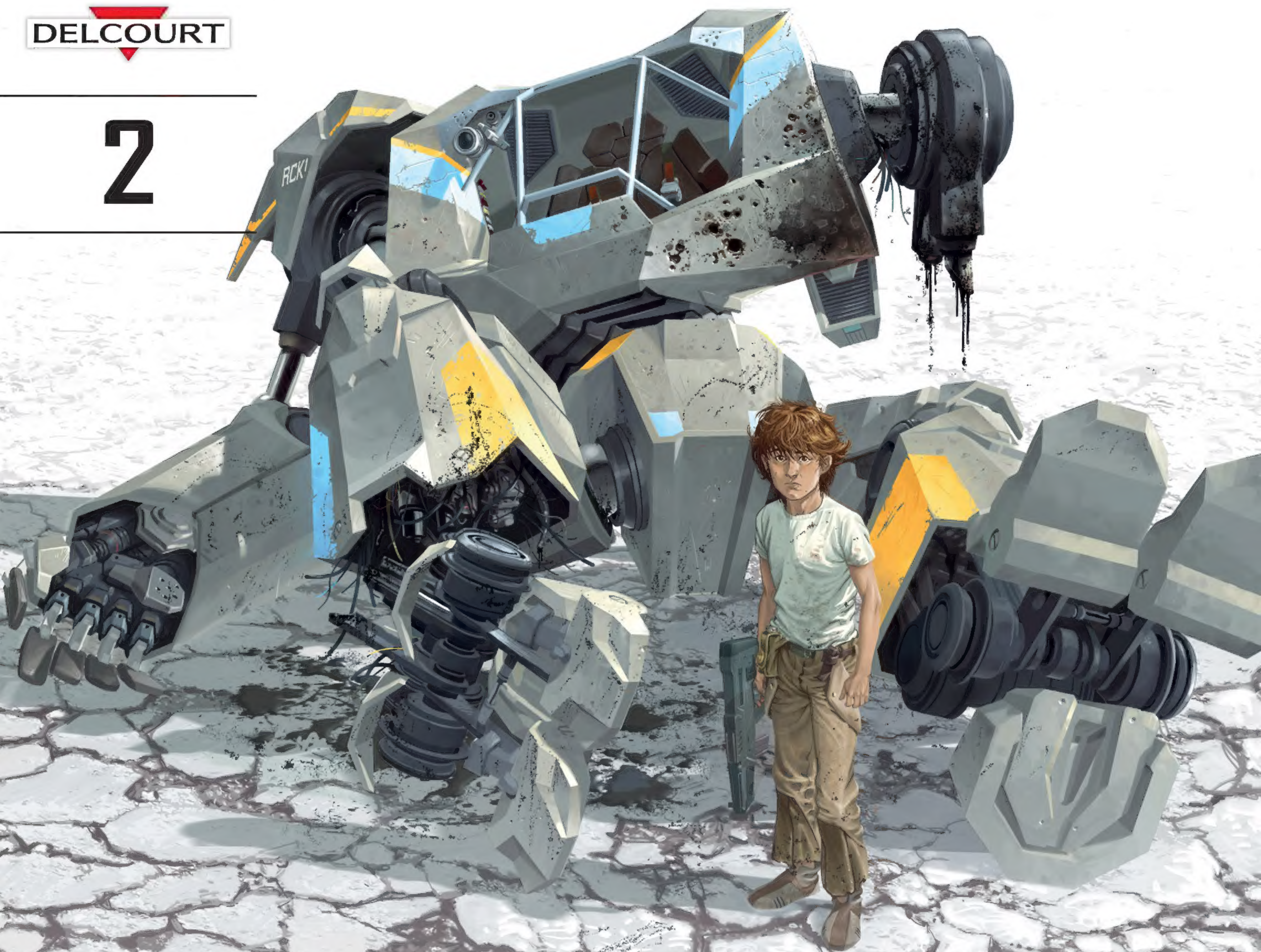


DEL COURT

2



ROCK & STONE

J E A N + V A L E A N I + G E O R G E S

ROCK & STONE
Volume 2/2

Script
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Art
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Colors
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ARE YOU SURE
IT'LL BE FINE?

OF COURSE,
IT'S NO
PROBLEM!

WHEN YOU HEAR
"AUTOMATIC MODE ACTIVATED",
BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, PUSH
THE NETWORK DISCONNECT
BUTTON.

DO YOU REMEMBER
WHICH ONE IT IS?

YEAH, THE ONE
WITH THE ROUND
SHAPES ON IT...

THE CONCENTRIC
HALF-CIRCLES!

YEAH.

I ASKED THE SATELLITE TO WAKE
ME UP IN EIGHT HOURS. I'LL SEND
YOU A SIGNAL TO WARN YOU.

YOU MIGHT STILL
BE ASLEEP. STAY UNDER
THE CLOAK, AND MAKE SURE
THAT THE AREA IS SAFE
BEFORE YOU RECONNECT
ME.

GOT IT.

YOU SURE
YOU WON'T BE
TOO COLD?

YEEEEES! C'MON,
GO TO BED ALREADY!
I'LL BE CAREFUL,
I PROMISE.

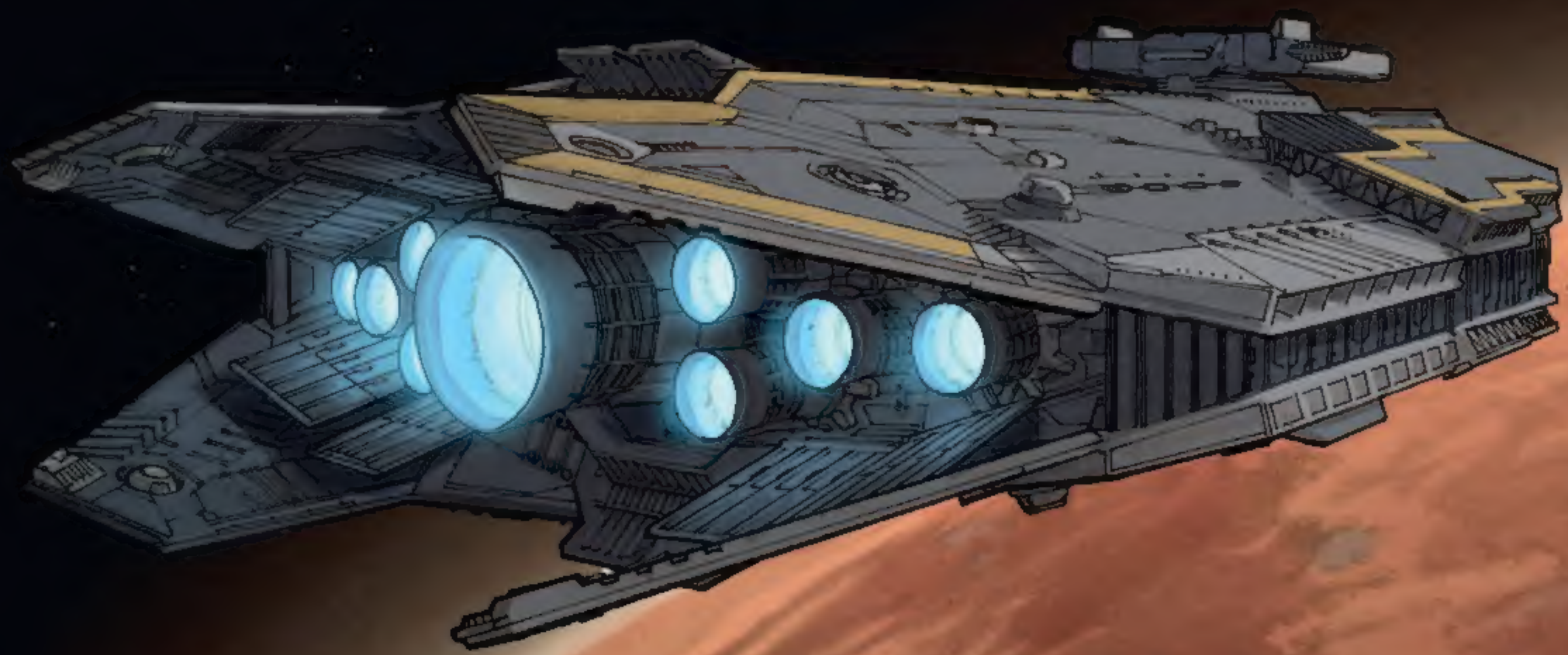
GOOD NIGHT,
STAN.

GOOD NIGHT,
DAD.

SWEET
DREAMS...

EARTH YEAR 2194.

TWENTY-ONE YEARS
EARLIER.

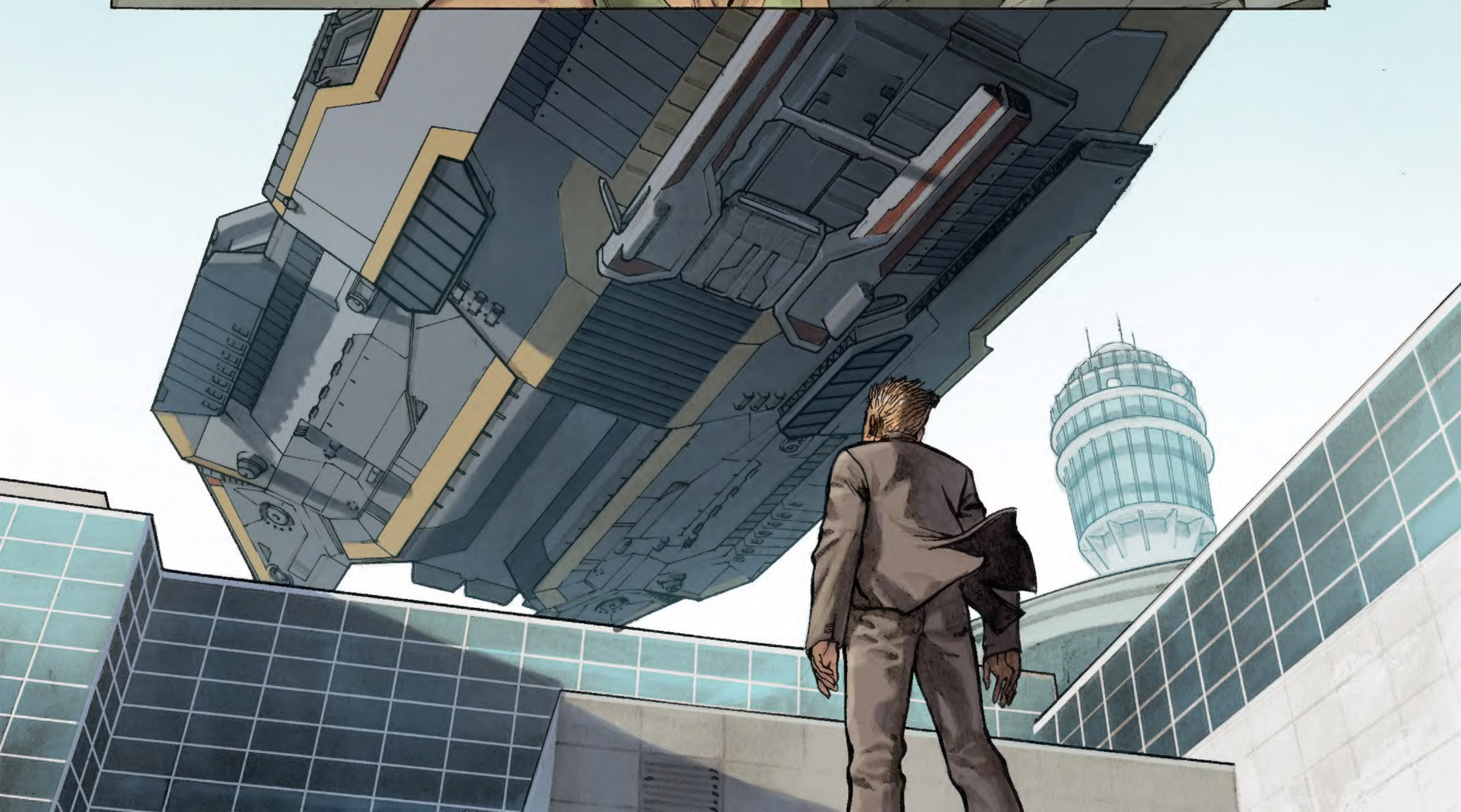


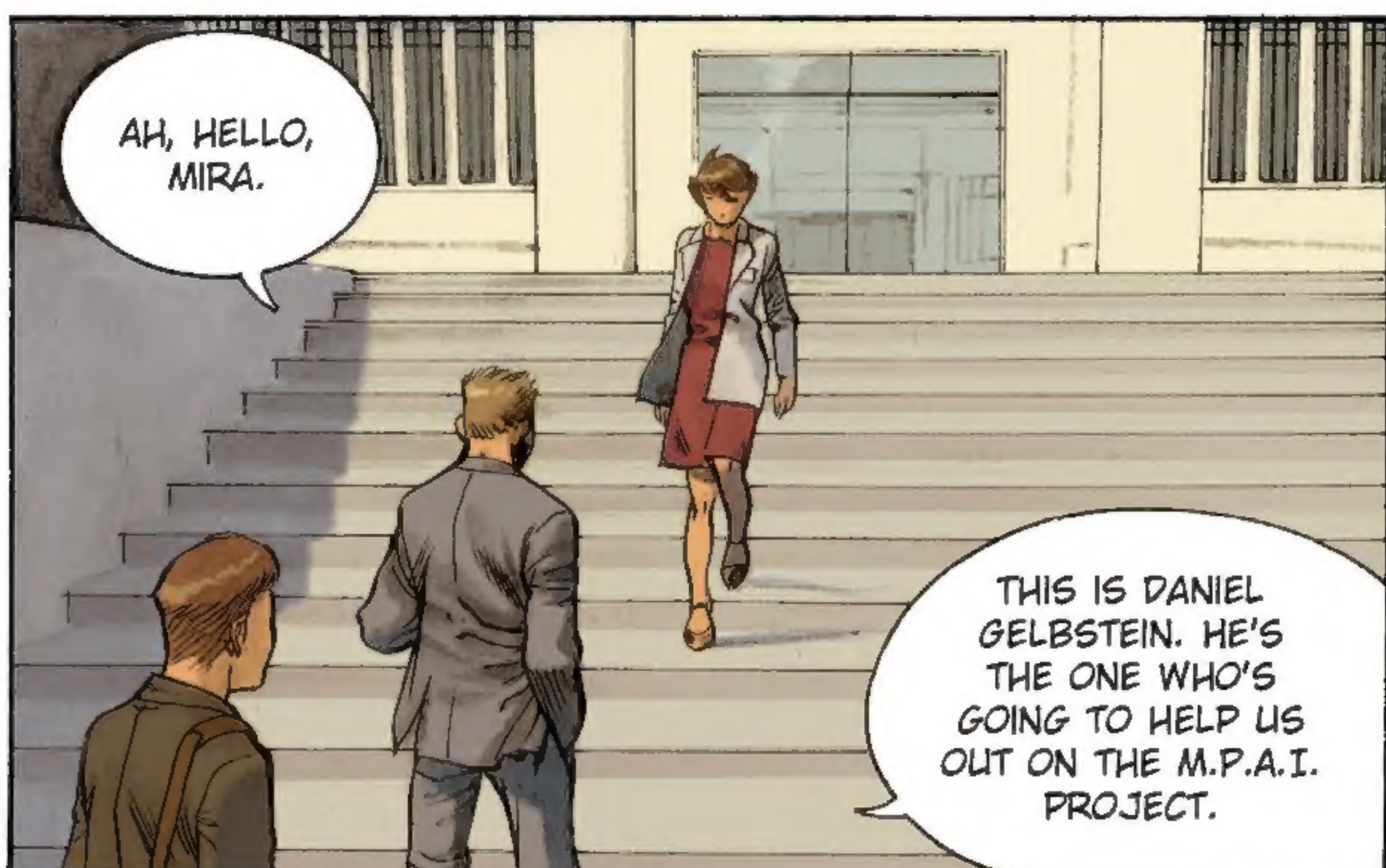
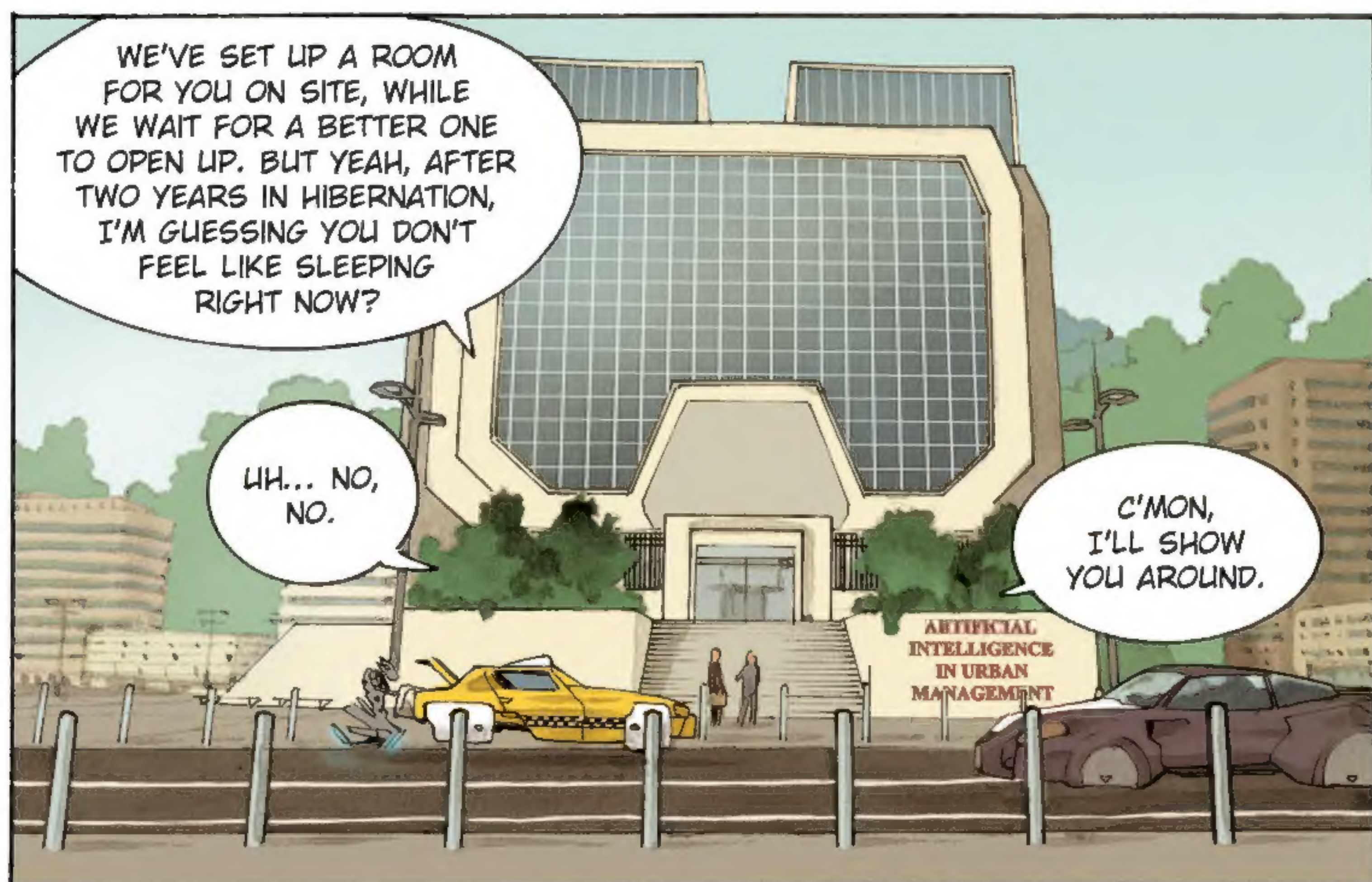
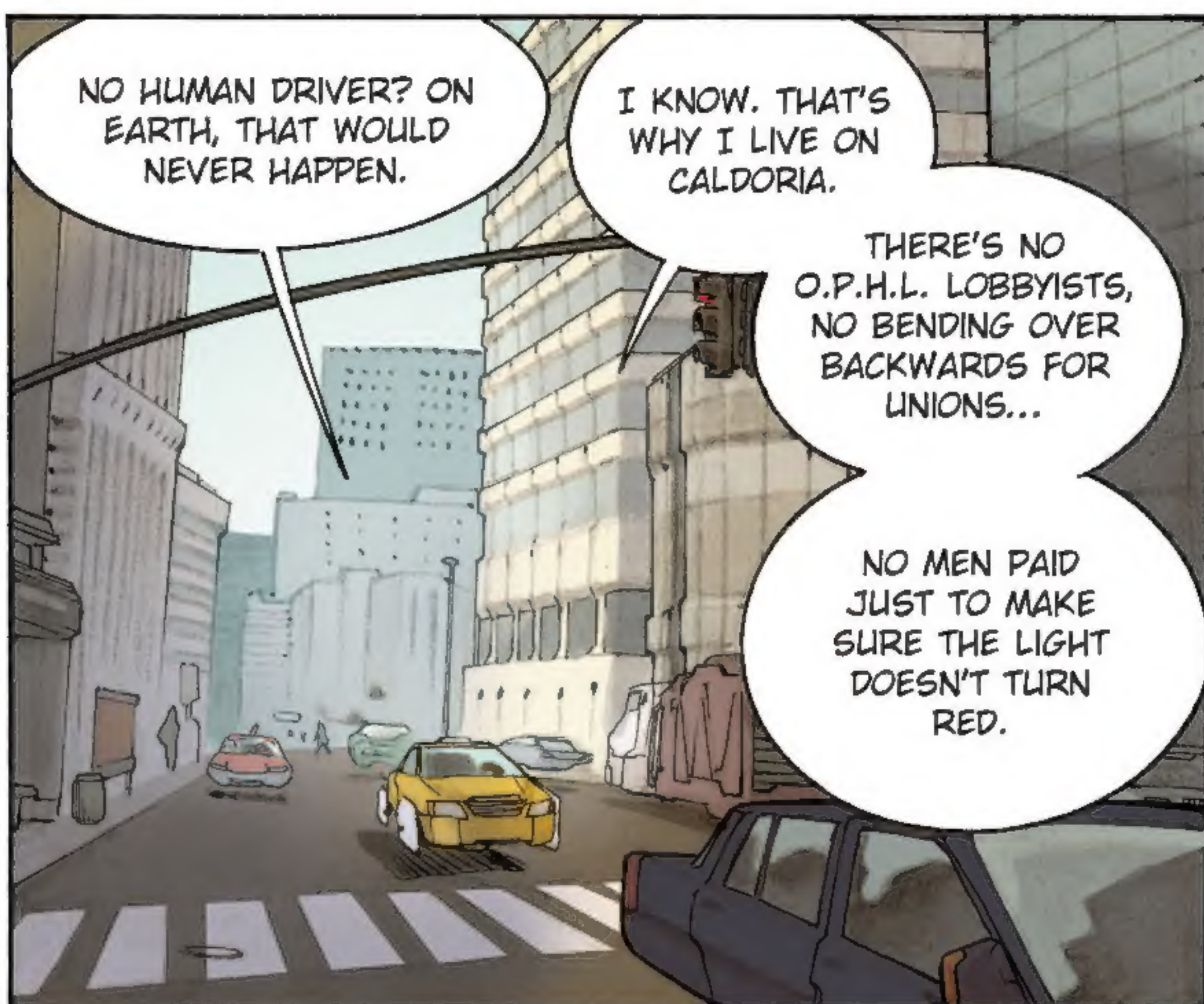
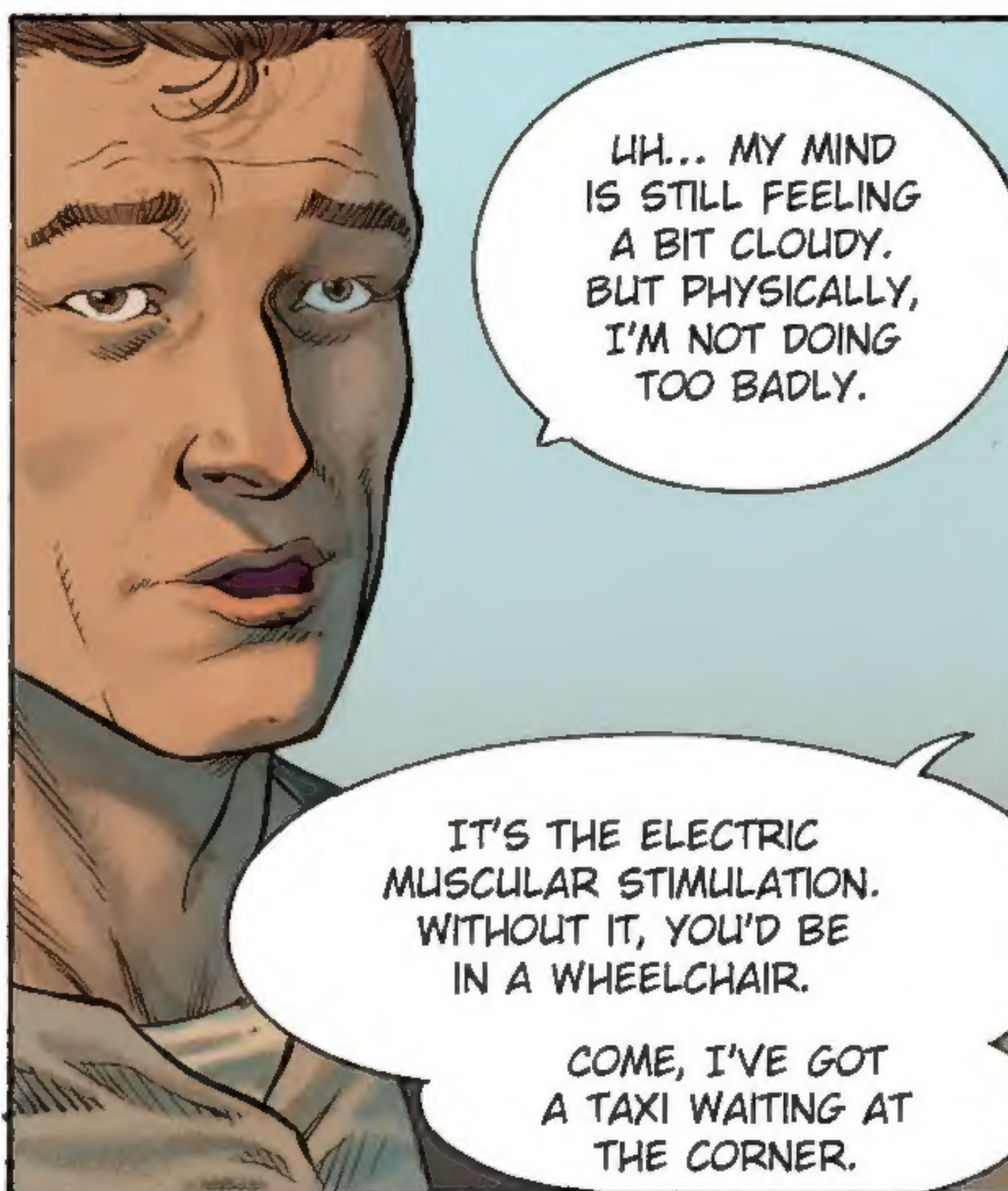
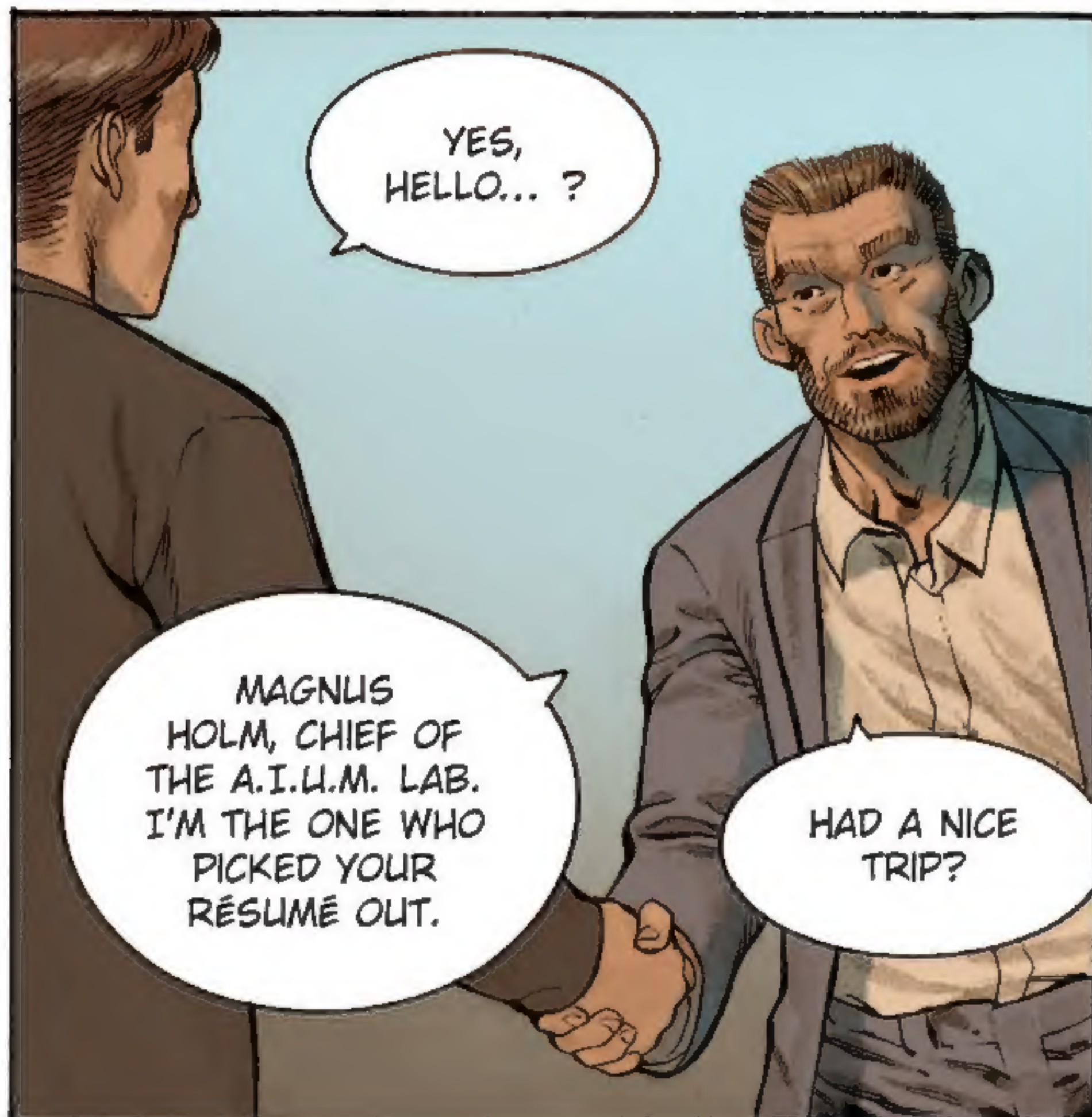
TO ALL PERSONNEL, A MESSAGE
FROM THE ON-BOARD COMMANDER.
ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL AT
CALDORIA: FOUR HOURS.

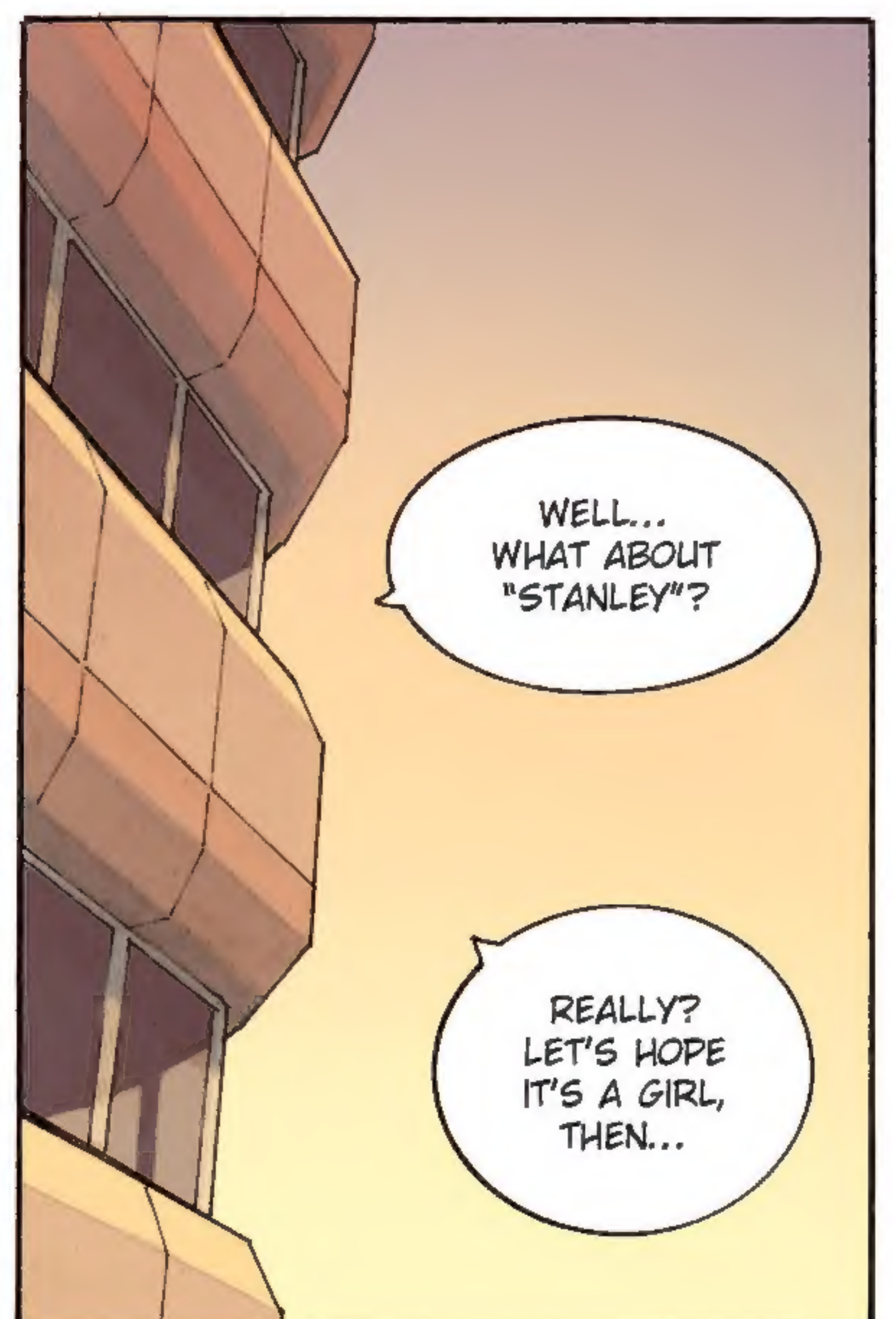
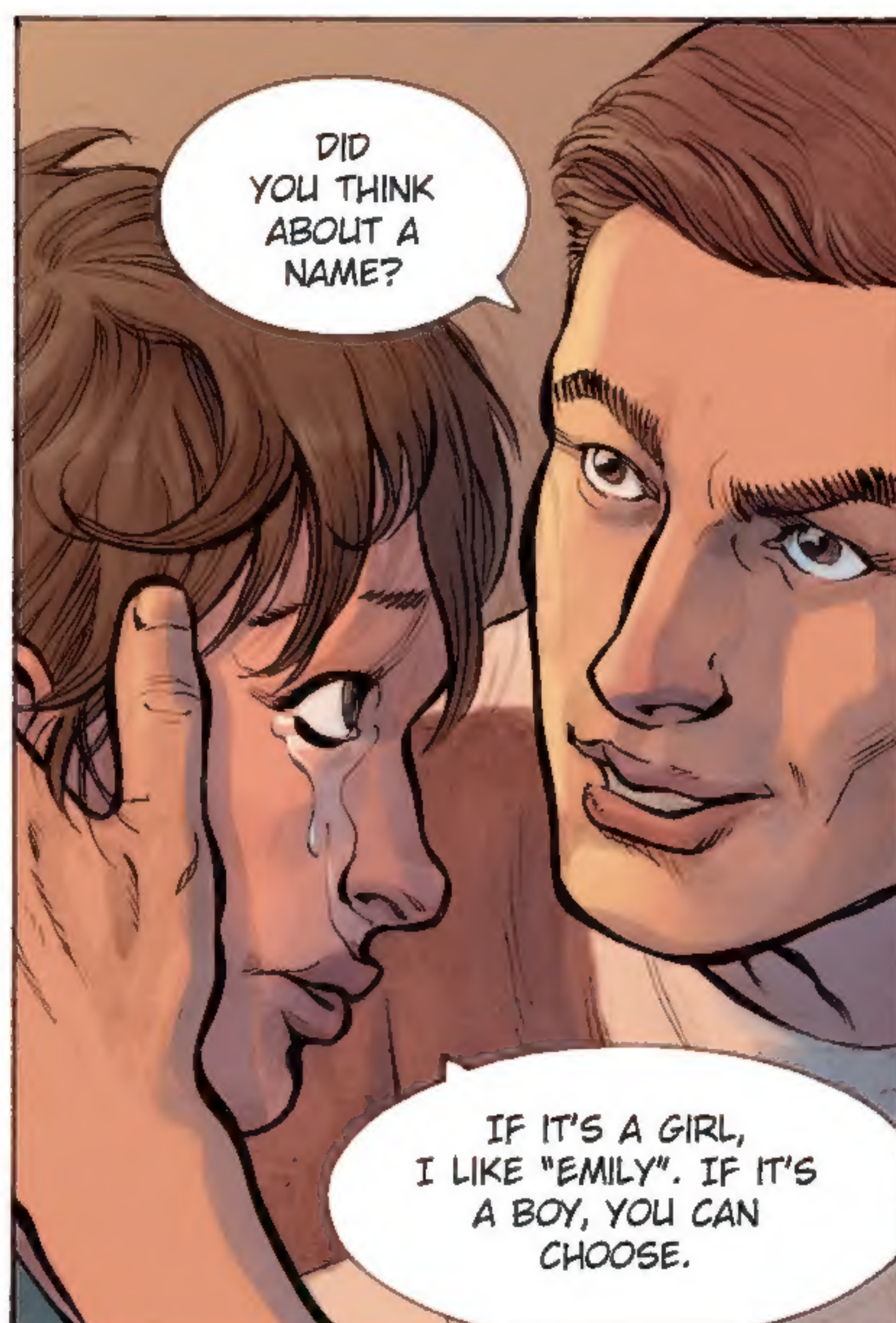
RECENTLY REANIMATED PASSENGERS SUFFERING
FROM VERTIGO, PERSISTENT NAUSEA, SHAKING,
OBSCURED VISION, OR HYPOTHERMIA ARE
INVITED TO USE THE ASSISTANCE BUTTON
SITUATED ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THEIR
HIBERNATION CAPSULE.



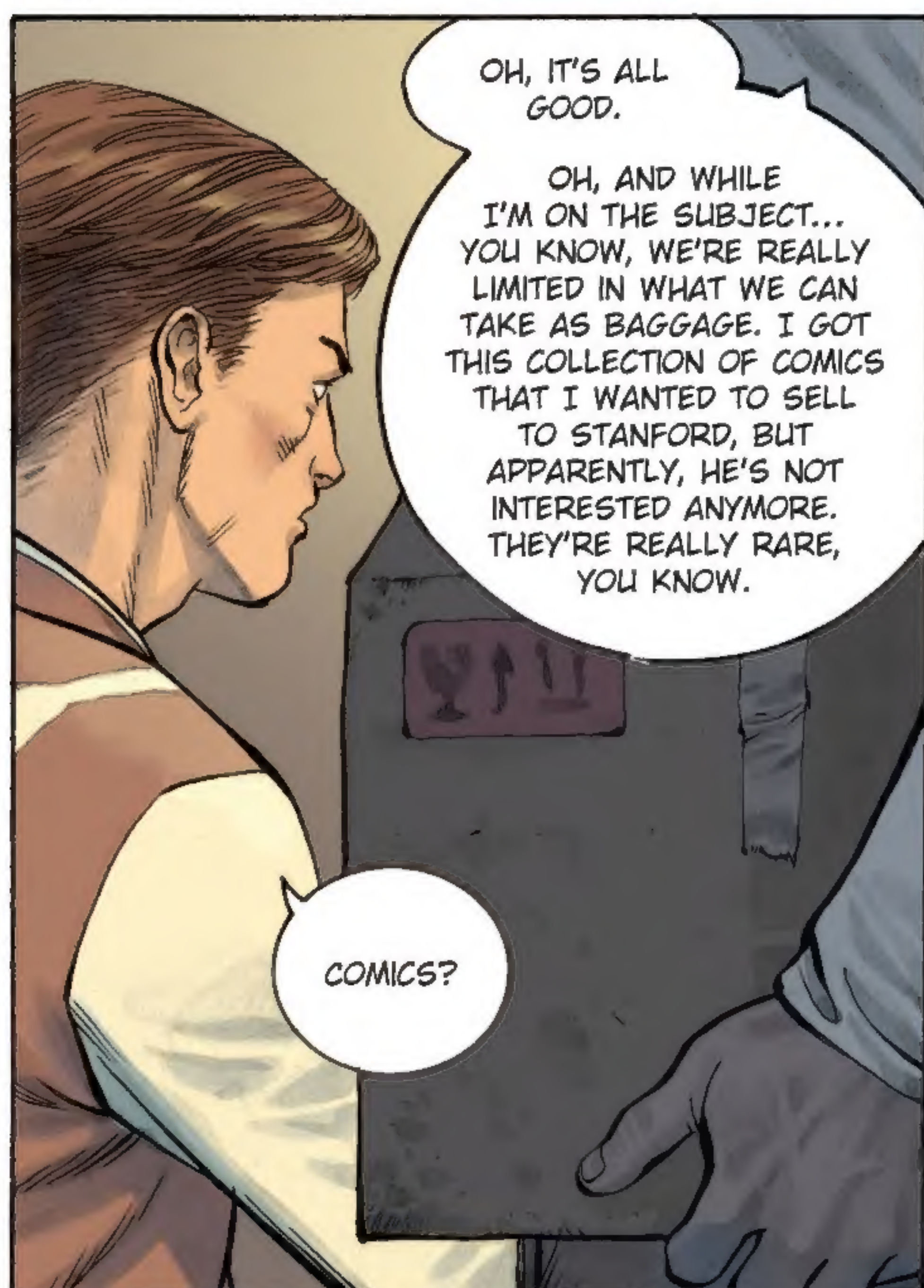
IN ORDER TO EASE THE WORKLOAD FOR OUR
MAINTENANCE CREW, ALL PASSENGERS WITH
THEIR CLOTHES AND PERSONAL EFFECTS MUST
PRESENT THEMSELVES WITHIN AN HOUR TO
HALL A2, WHERE THEIR INVENTORY WILL BE
PROCESSED, BEFORE CHECK OUT.

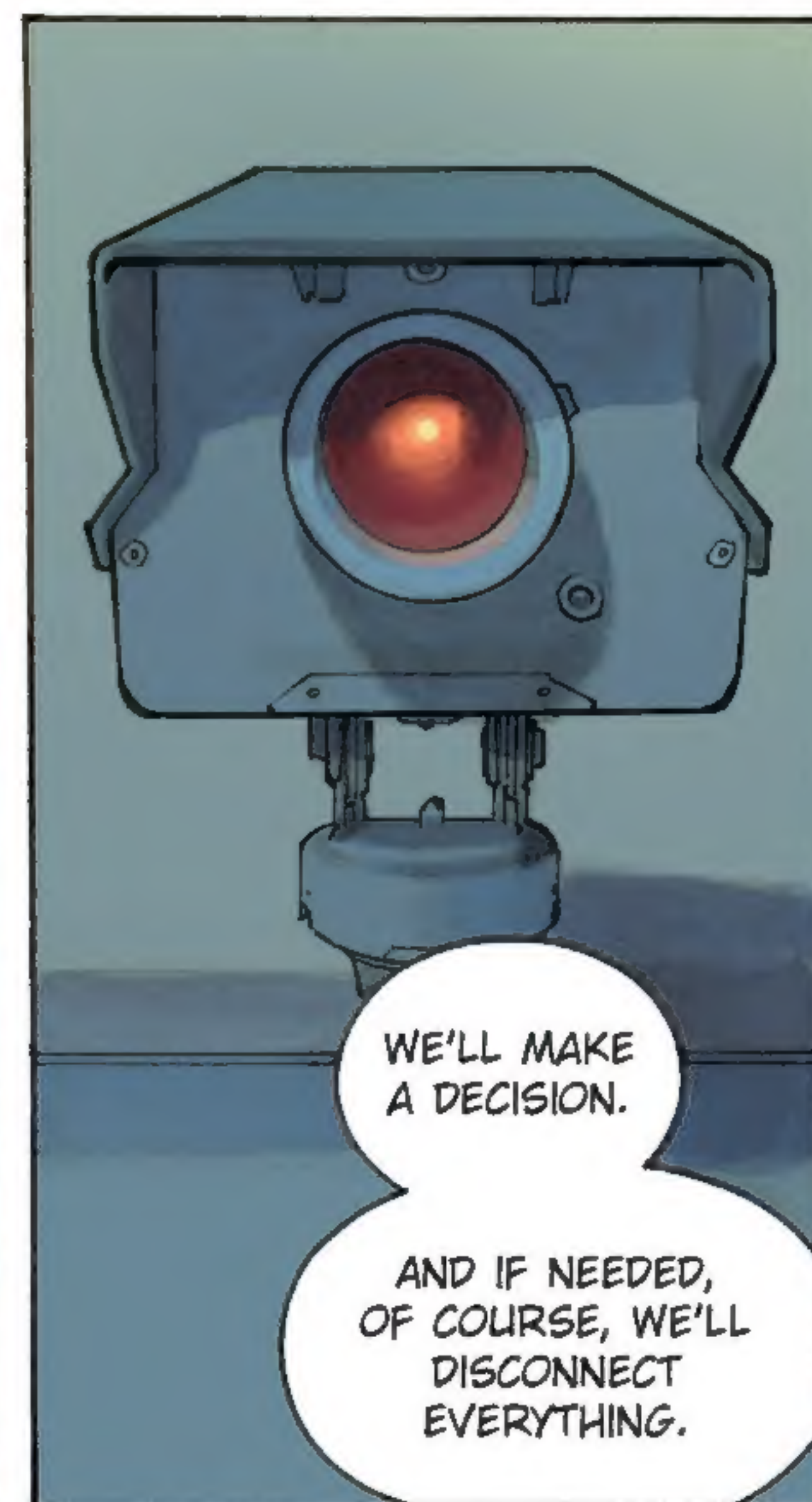
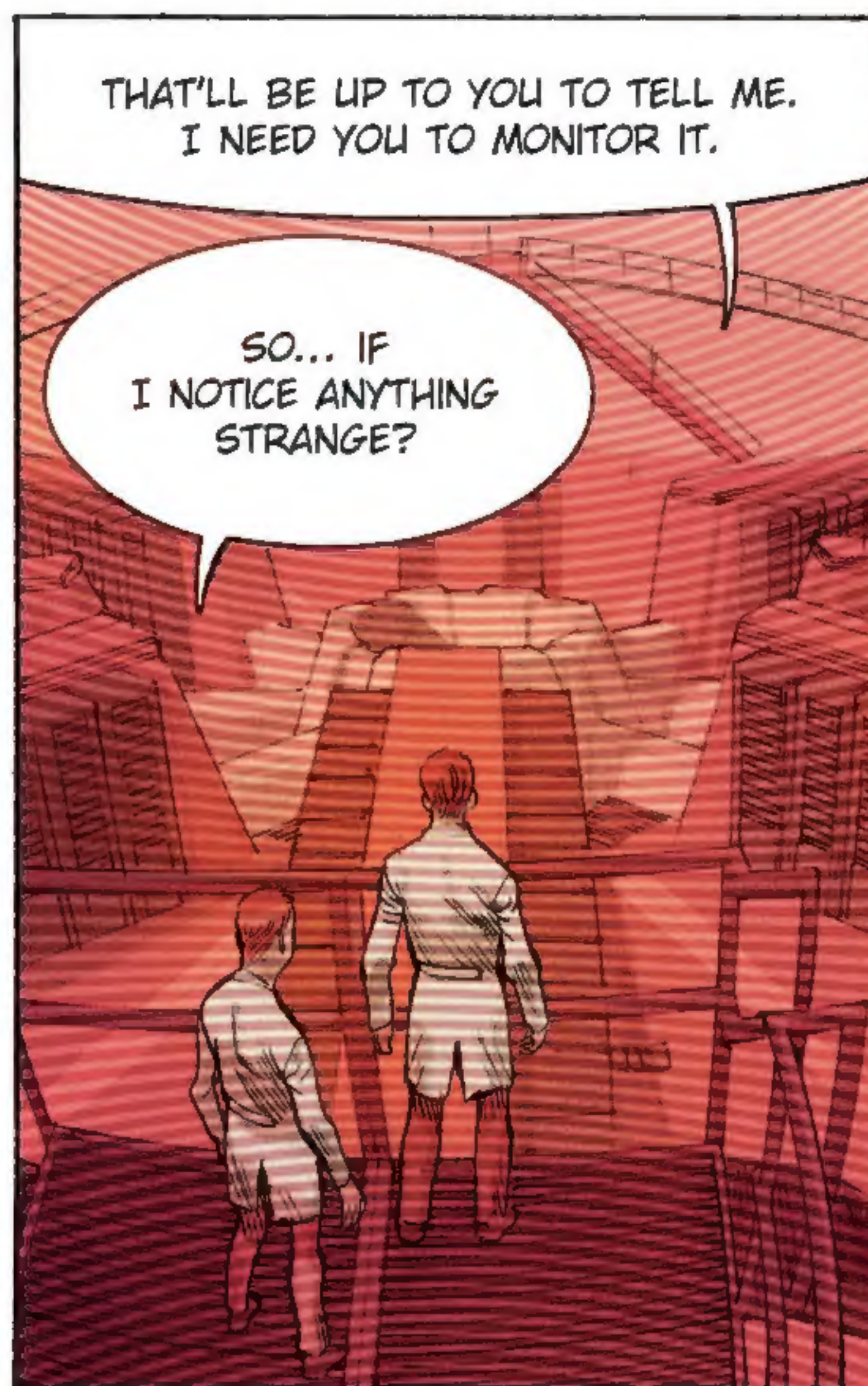
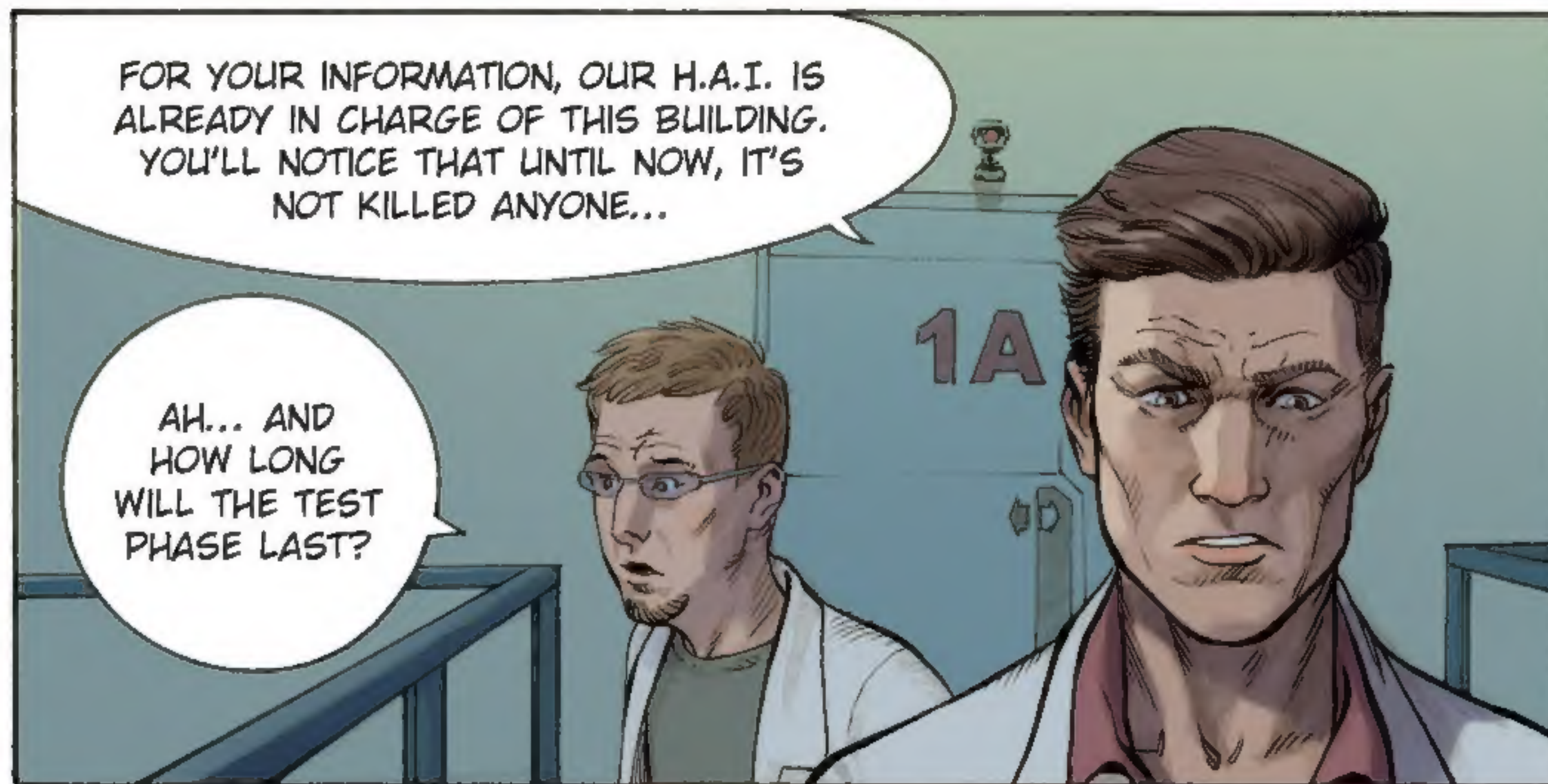
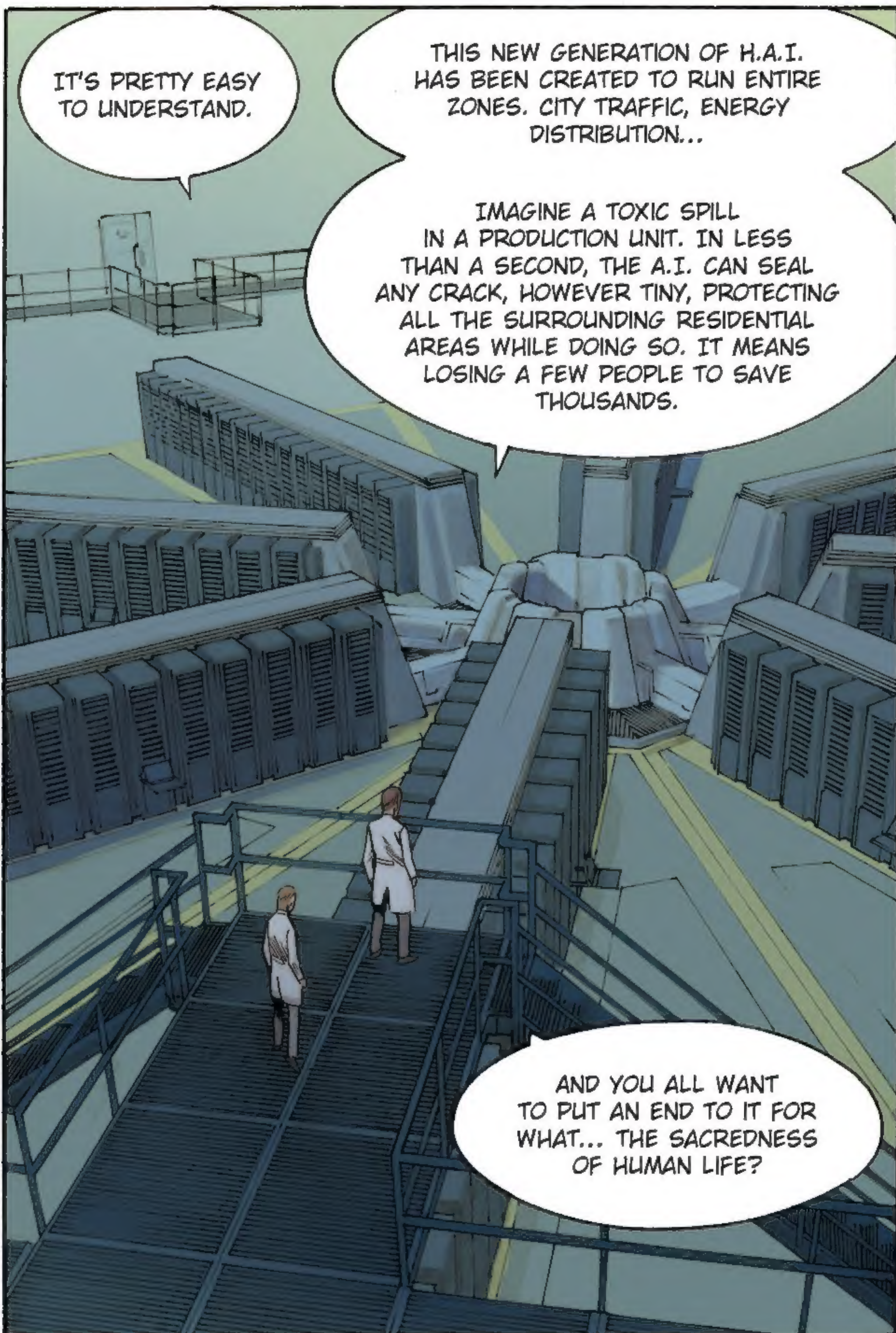
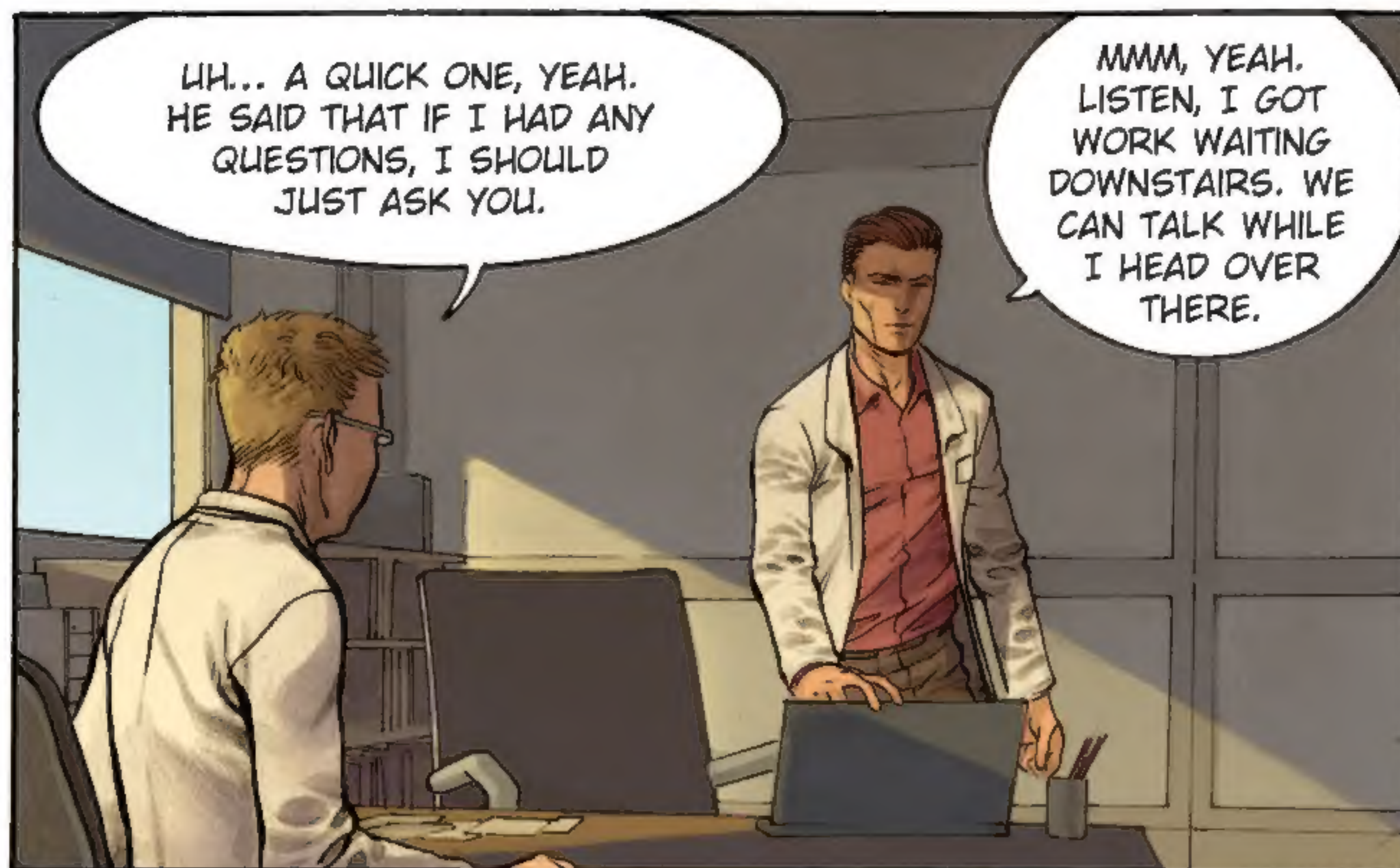


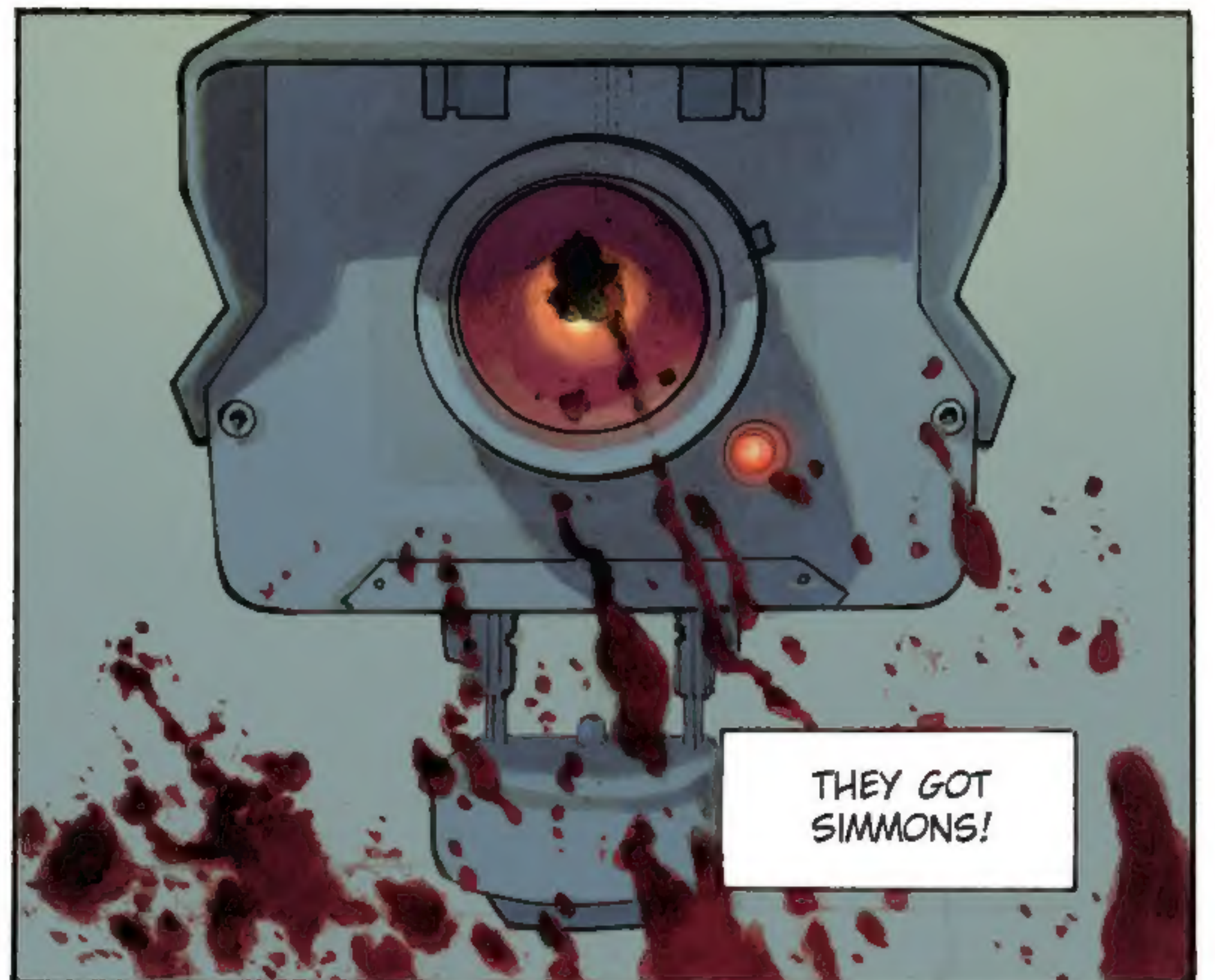
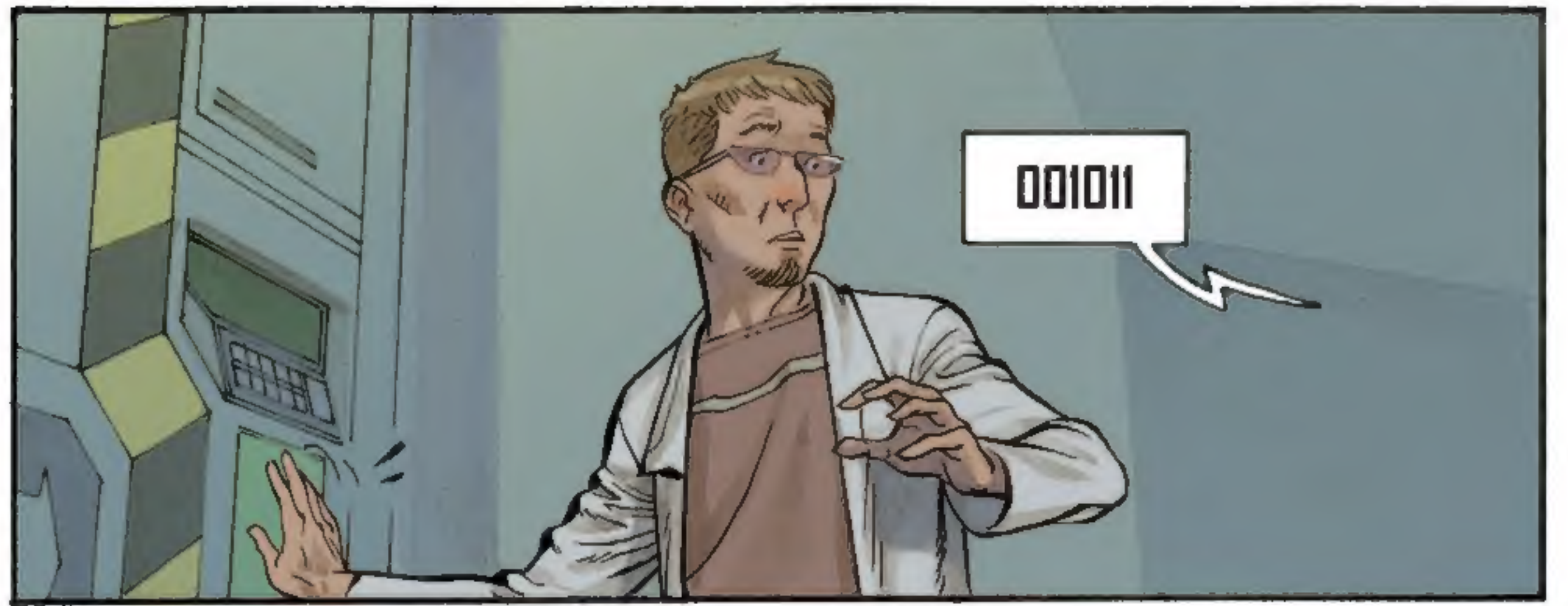












TWO MONTHS LATER.

I'VE CHECKED THREE TIMES, GELBSTEIN. I'VE BENT OVER BACKWARDS JUST SO I CAN TELL YOU THAT IT'S NOT COMING FROM US!

TORI, THAT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE! I GOT IN TOUCH WITH BASE TWO HOURS AGO. THEY MIGHT HAVE CHANGED THEIR ENCRYPTION SYSTEM...

WITHOUT WARNING US? JUST BEFORE SENDING US THE CANNON? YEAH, THAT SOUNDS COMPLETELY LOGICAL.

THEY'RE EQUIPPED TO RESIST THE MACHINES' ATTACK. AND I CAME UP WITH THEIR I.T. DEFENSES AFTER BASING IT ON H.A.I.'S PROTOCOLS.

WE CALL IT "HAIVE" NOW, DID YOU FORGET? VIRAL, AND EVOLVING. IT MEANS THAT IT STINKS, AND IT STICKS...

... IN MY OPINION, YOU HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA YET.

WELL, IT'S YOUR BABY. YOU MUST BE PROUD.

DID YOU TRY THEIR UNENCRYPTED FREQUENCIES?

NO, BUT AT THE STAGE WE'RE AT...

00101 011 10100

SO, WHAT'S UP?

BE AS SNARKY AS YOU WANT, BUT MY SON IS DOWN THERE! GOT ANY CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM, MAYBE?

UH... HANG ON, I HAVE TO CHECK SOMETHING...

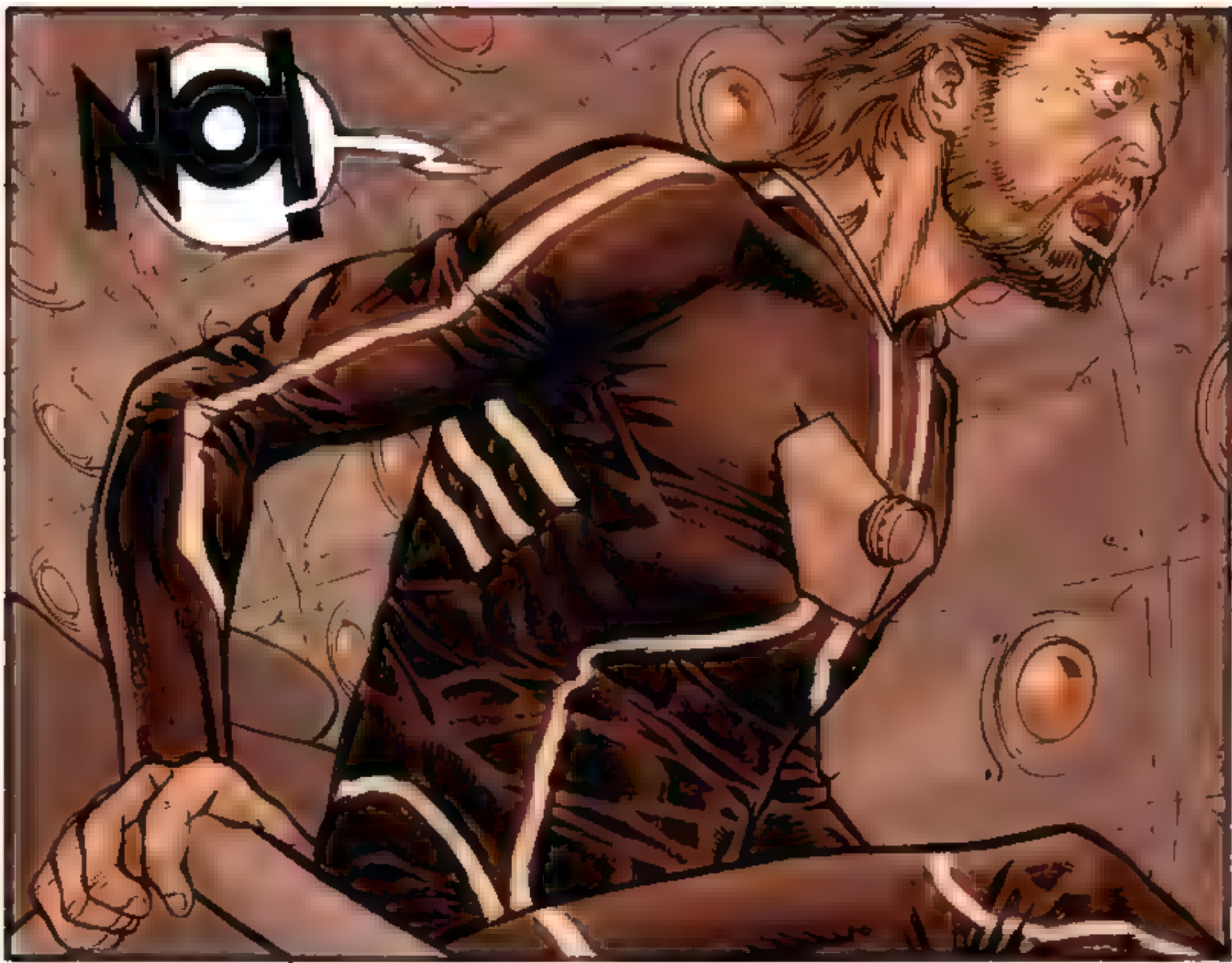
COME BACK. WE GOTTA SORT THIS OUT...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I CAN HEAR THE NOISE FROM HERE. I SUPPOSE THAT'S JUST AS WELL...

OH, IT'S BEEN SORTED OUT. IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN ROT HERE.

I'D PREFER TO END THIS QUICKLY, IF IT'S FOR THE SAME RESULT...

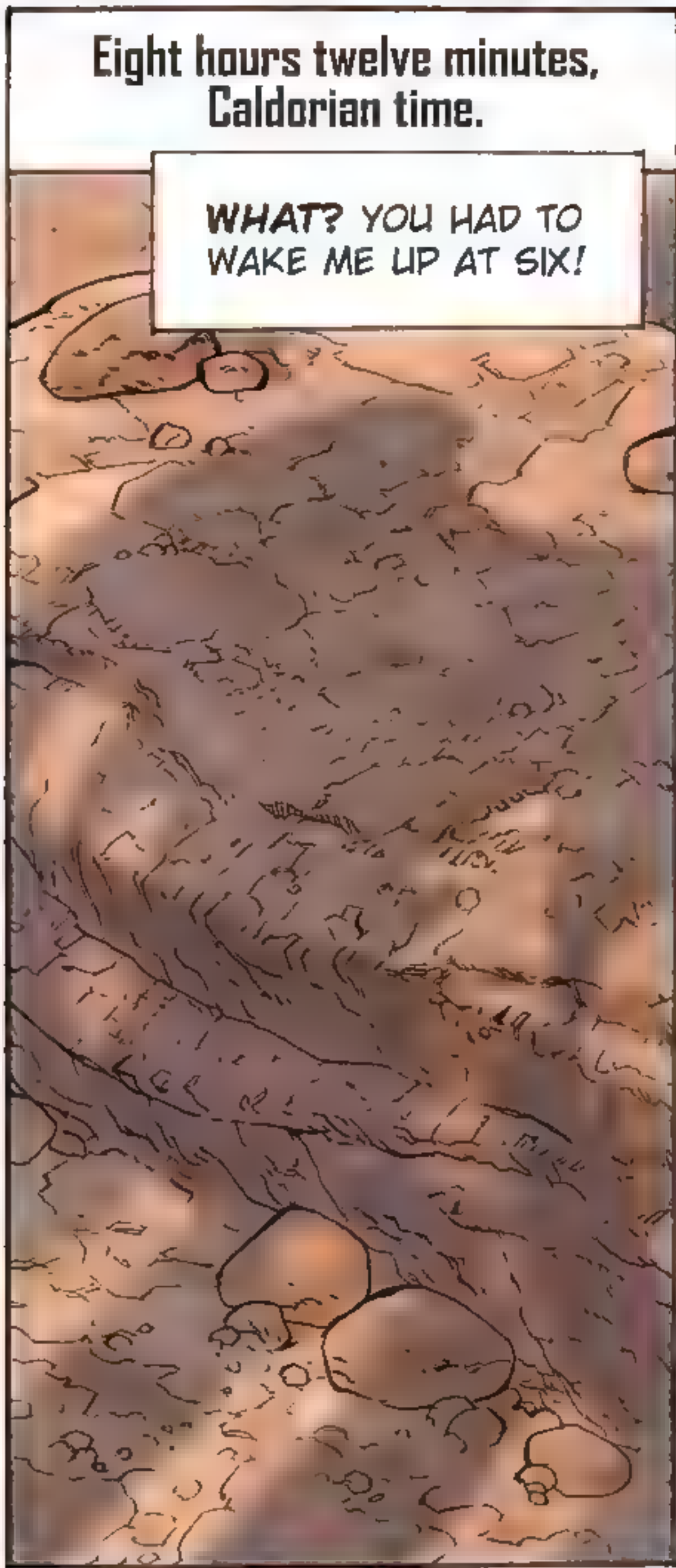
SAYONARA, PROFESSOR GELBSTEIN.



2215.

PRESENT DAY.

W...
WHAT TIME
IS IT?

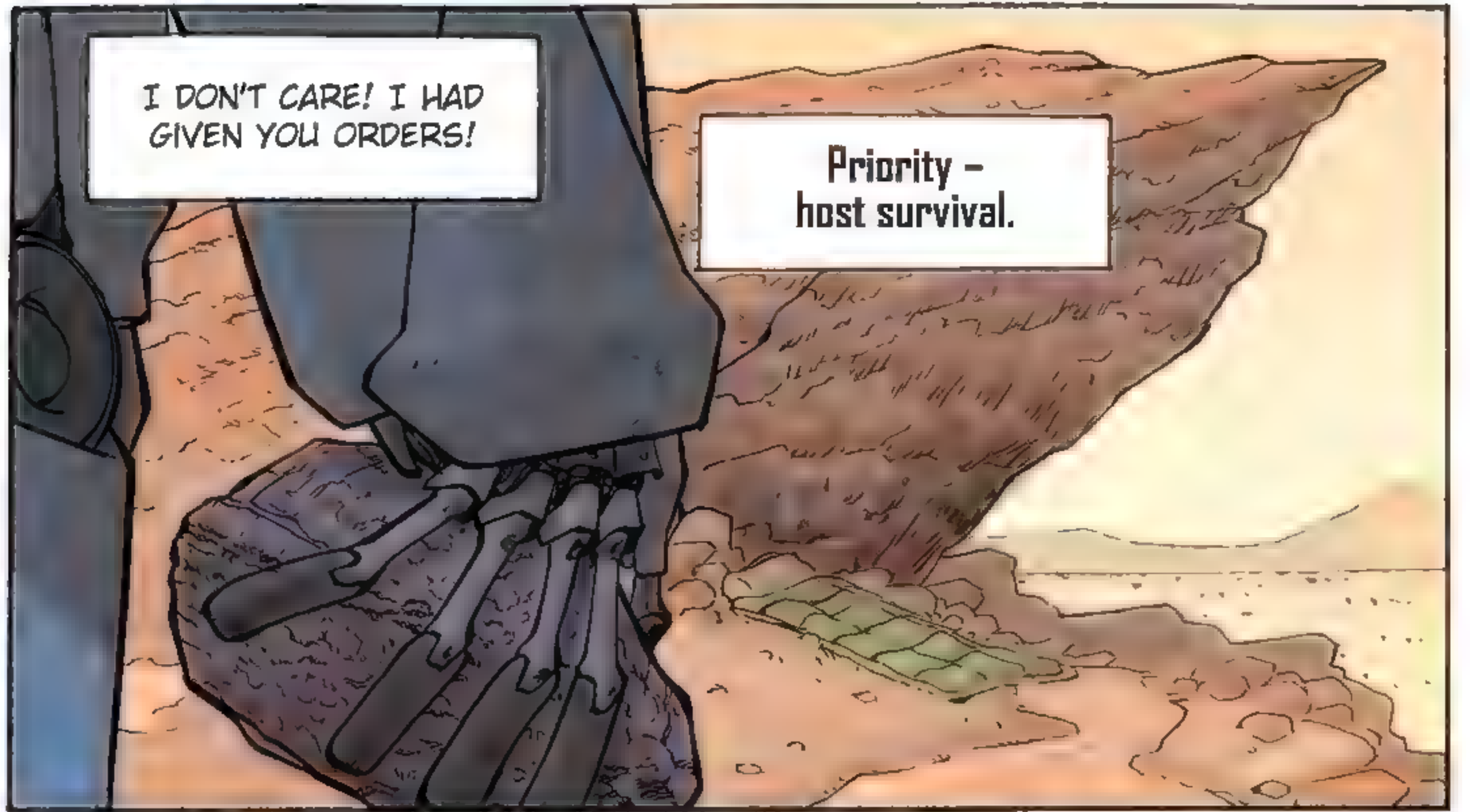


Eight hours twelve minutes,
Caldorian time.

WHAT? YOU HAD TO
WAKE ME UP AT SIX!

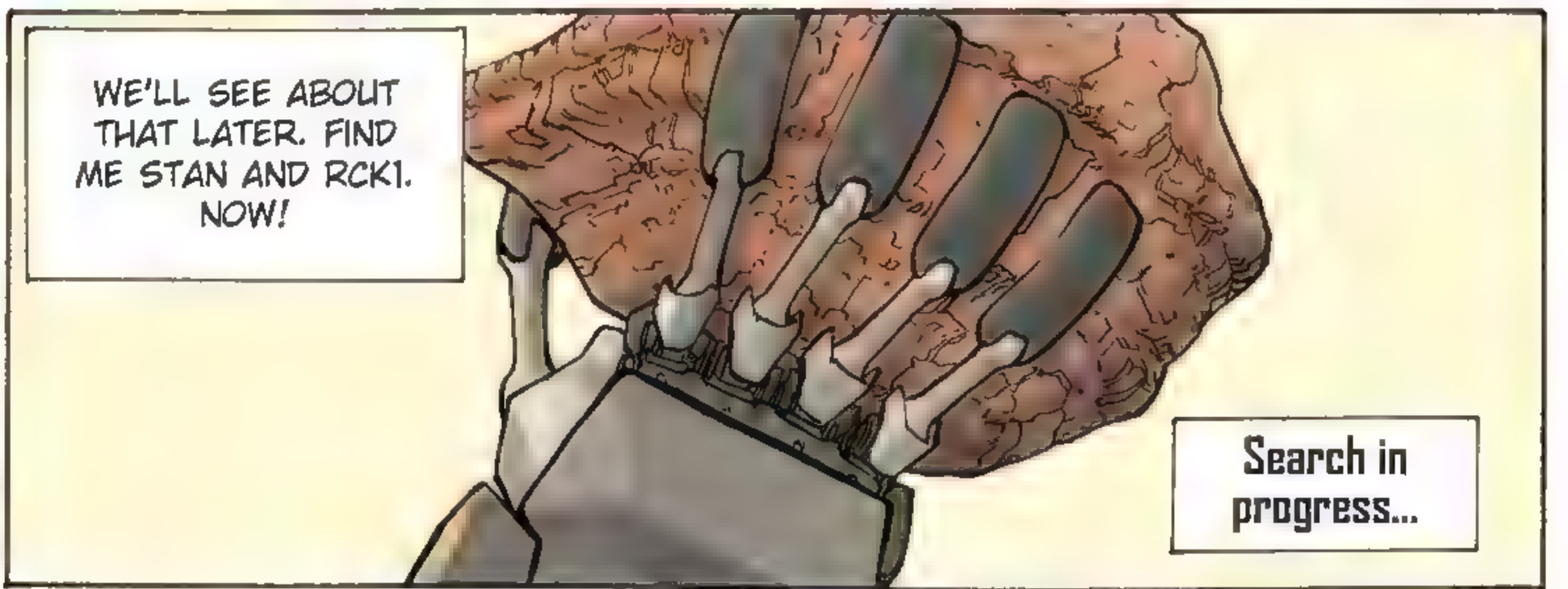


Survival mode - insufficient
resources. Minimal rest
duration - increased.



I DON'T CARE! I HAD
GIVEN YOU ORDERS!

Priority -
host survival.

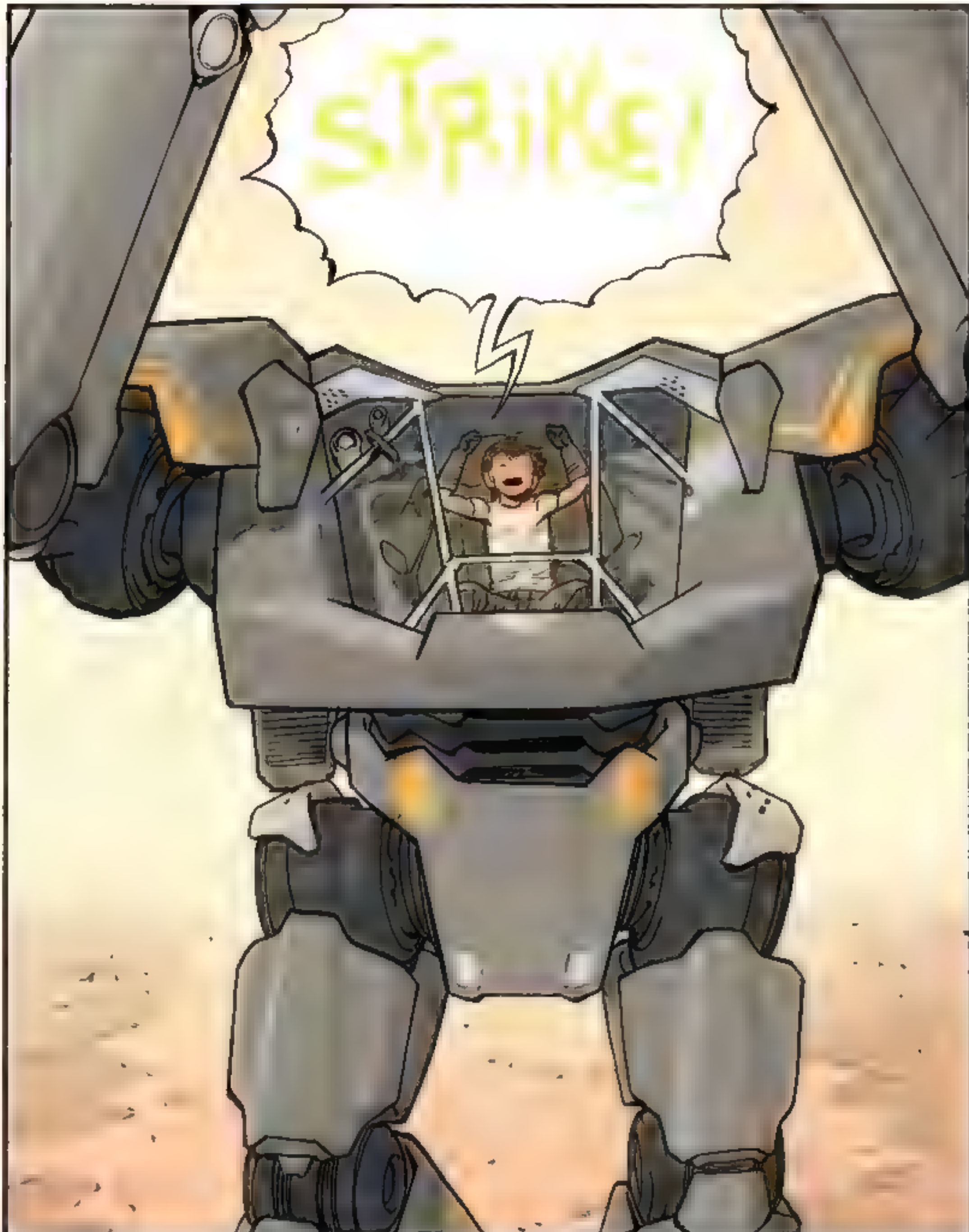


WE'LL SEE ABOUT
THAT LATER. FIND
ME STAN AND RCKI.
NOW!

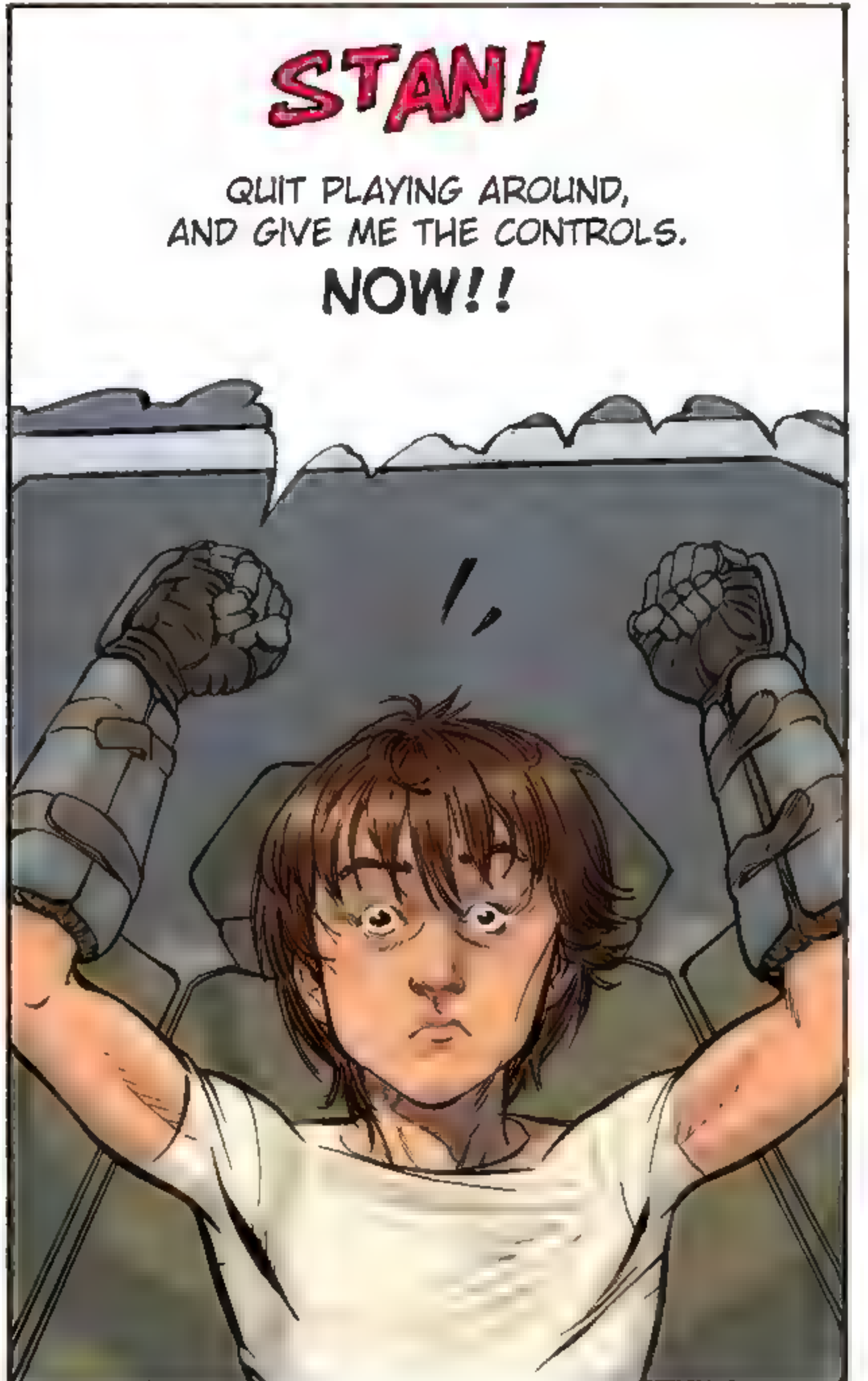
Search in
progress...



PRAK



STRIKE!



STAN!

QUIT PLAYING AROUND,
AND GIVE ME THE CONTROLS.
NOW!!



IT'S NOT MY FAULT IF YOU WOKE UP LATER THAN PLANNED.

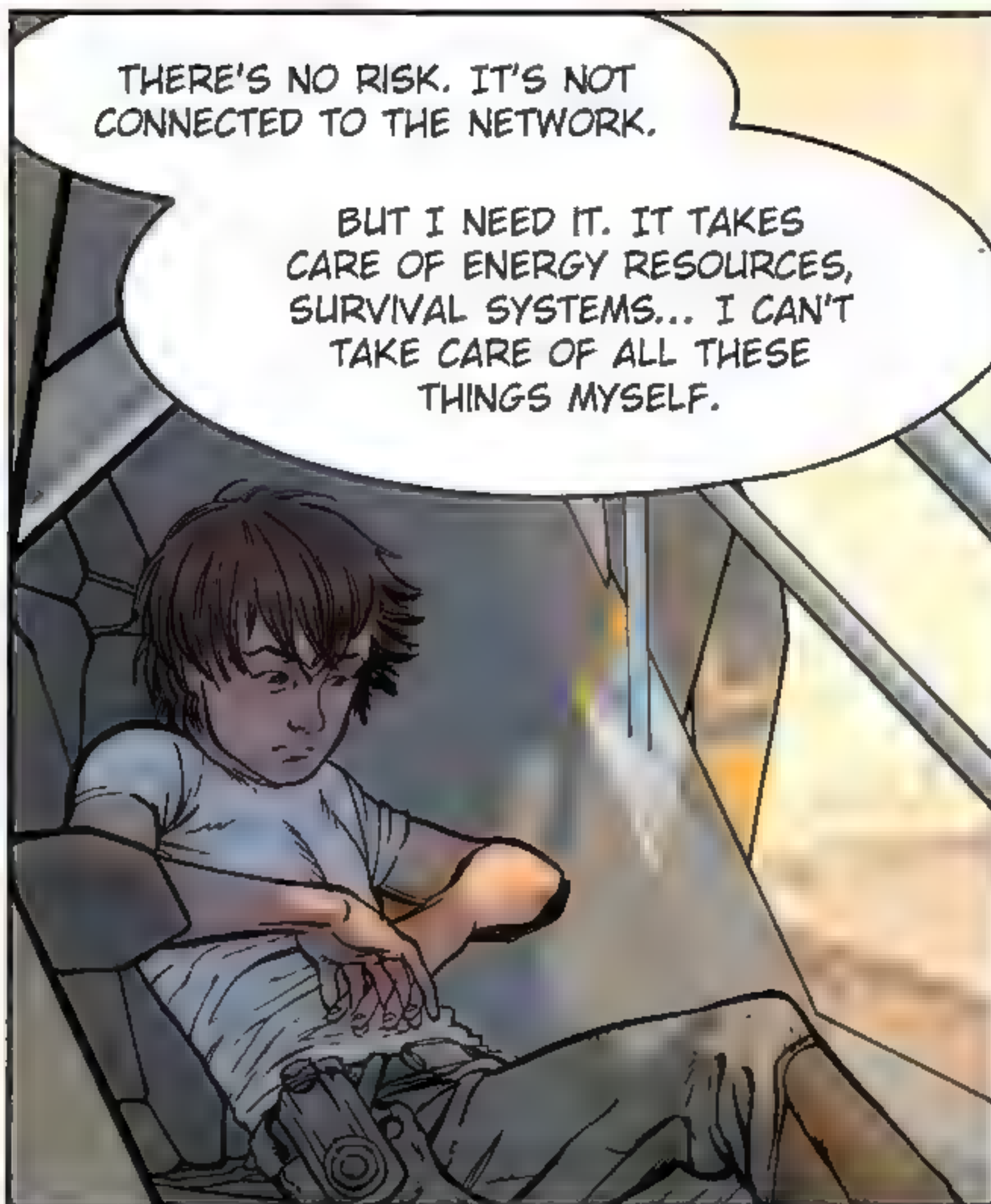
YEAH, RIGHT. PLUS, WANTING TO GO BOWLING, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST. OBVIOUSLY.



STAN, YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND. I ALREADY HAVE TROUBLE BEING OBEYED BY THE SATELLITE A.I.

AND IF ON TOP OF THAT, I CAN'T TRUST YOU, THIS IS GOING TO BE POINTLESS.

WELL... WHY DON'T YOU JUST DISCONNECT IT? PLUS, I GUESS IT'S BEEN PIRATED BY HAIVÉ...



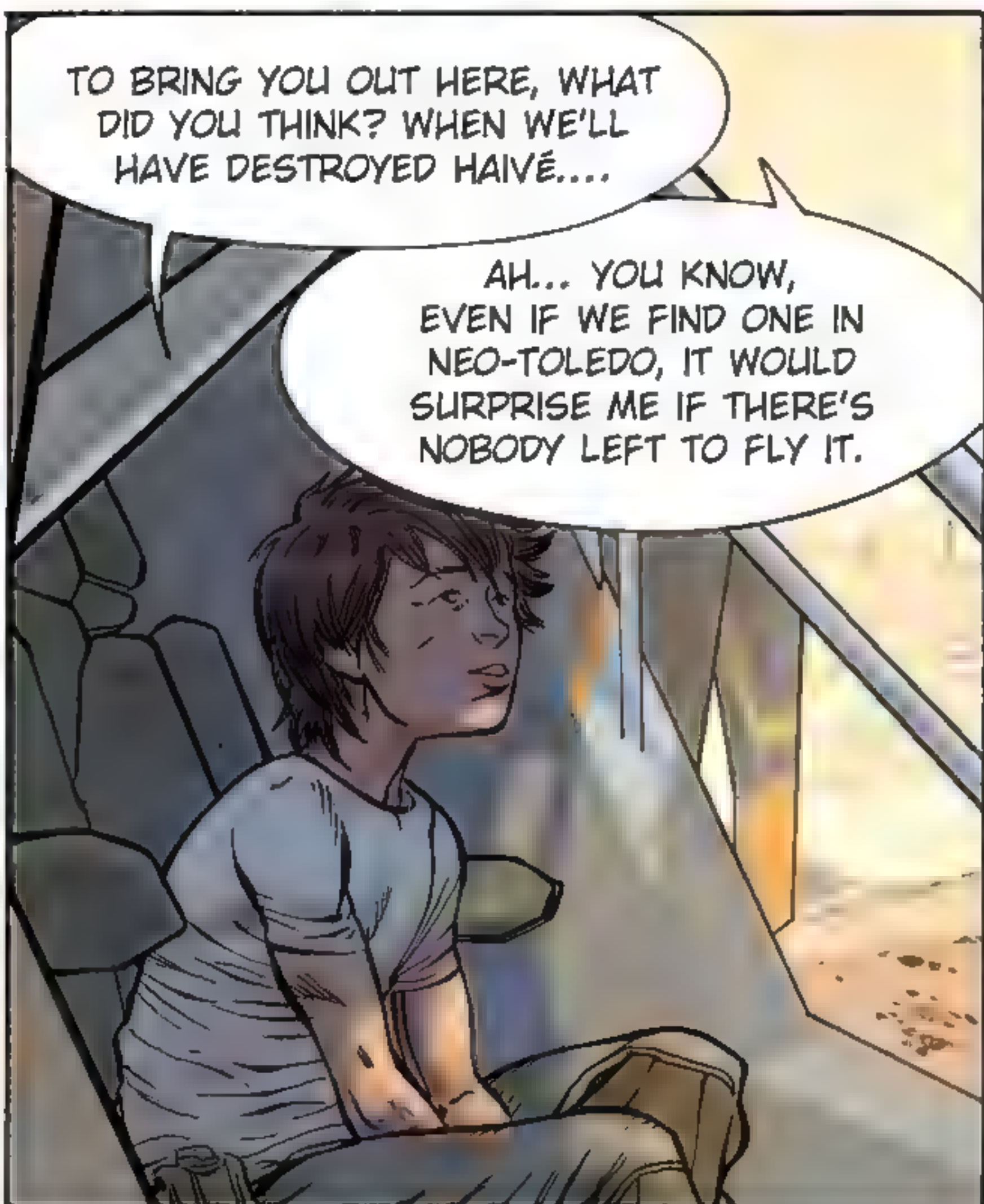
THERE'S NO RISK. IT'S NOT CONNECTED TO THE NETWORK.

BUT I NEED IT. IT TAKES CARE OF ENERGY RESOURCES, SURVIVAL SYSTEMS... I CAN'T TAKE CARE OF ALL THESE THINGS MYSELF.



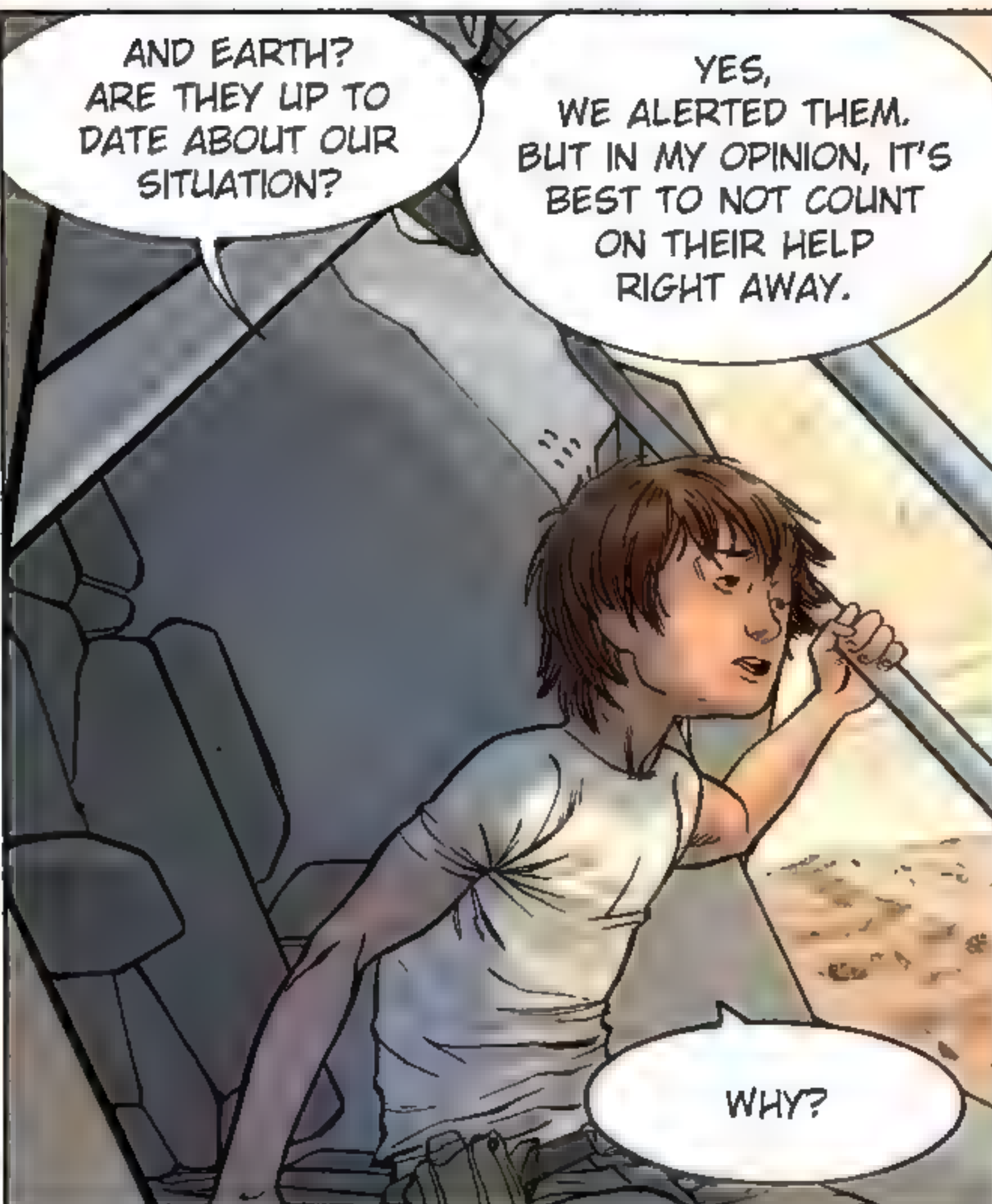
IN ANY CASE, WE NEED A VESSEL.

WHAT? TO DO WHAT?



TO BRING YOU OUT HERE, WHAT DID YOU THINK? WHEN WE'LL HAVE DESTROYED HAIVÉ...

AH... YOU KNOW, EVEN IF WE FIND ONE IN NEO-TOLEDO, IT WOULD SURPRISE ME IF THERE'S NOBODY LEFT TO FLY IT.

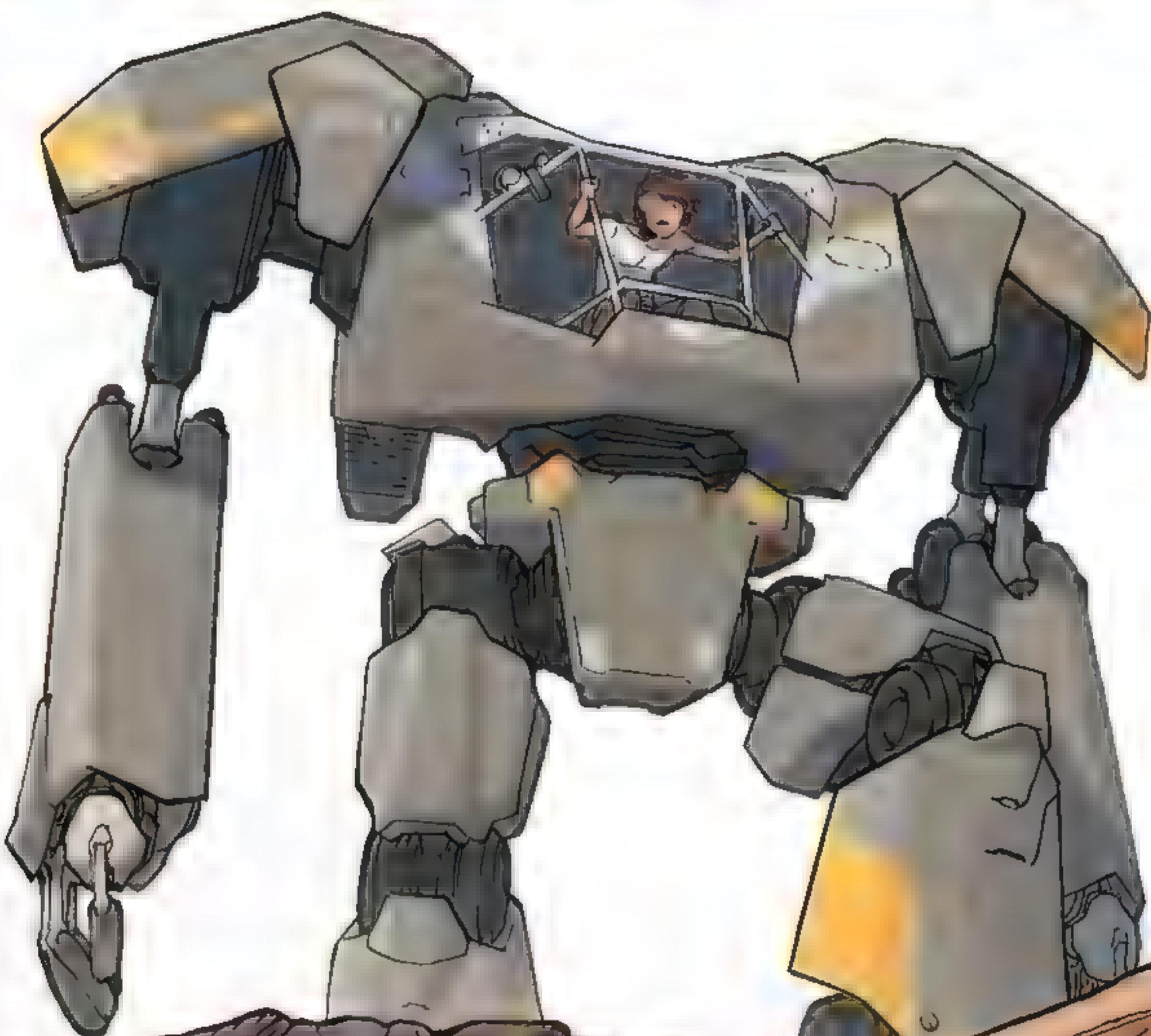


AND EARTH? ARE THEY UP TO DATE ABOUT OUR SITUATION?

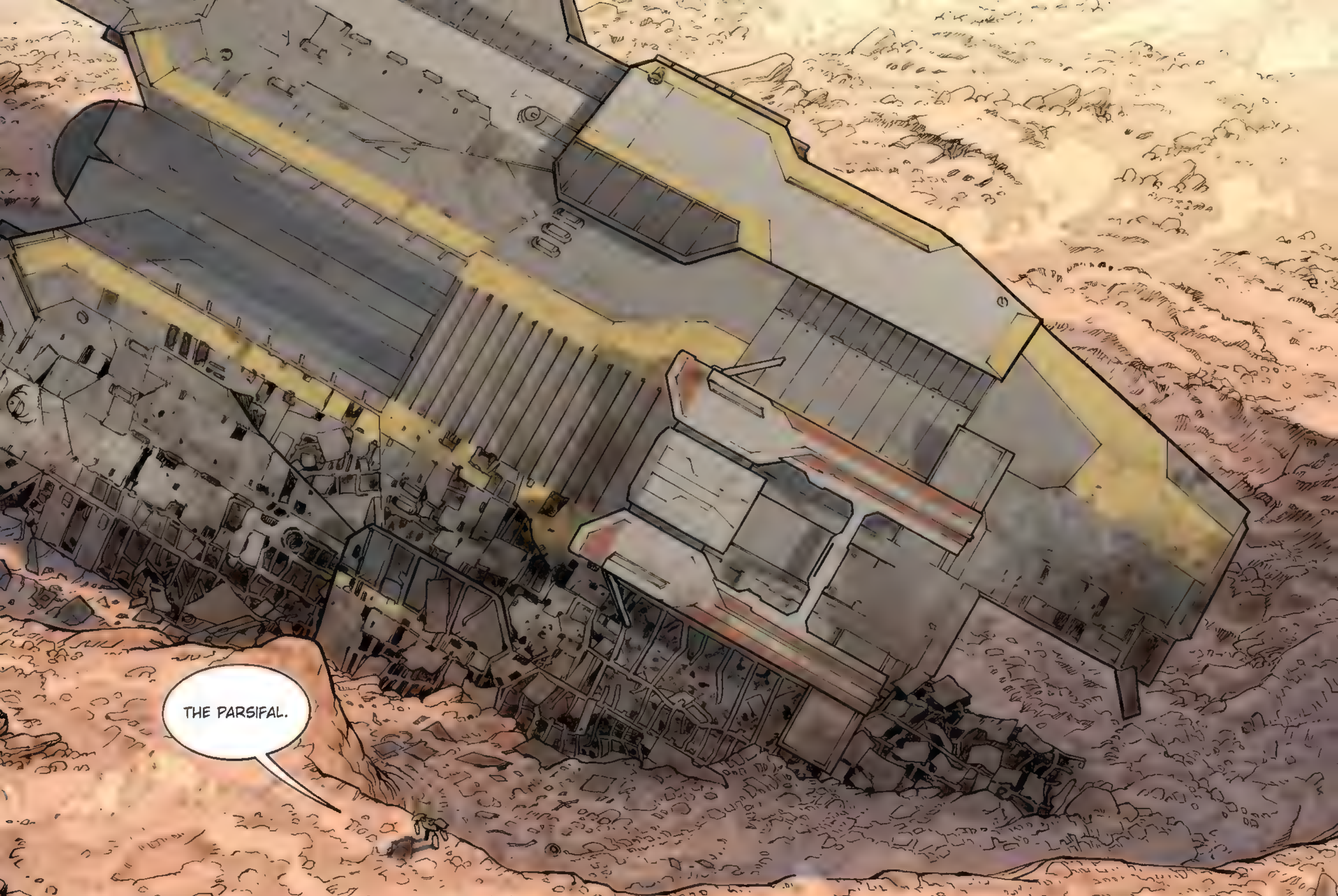
YES, WE ALERTED THEM. BUT IN MY OPINION, IT'S BEST TO NOT COUNT ON THEIR HELP RIGHT AWAY.

WHY?

FIRST, BECAUSE A TRIP FROM THERE TAKES TWO YEARS.



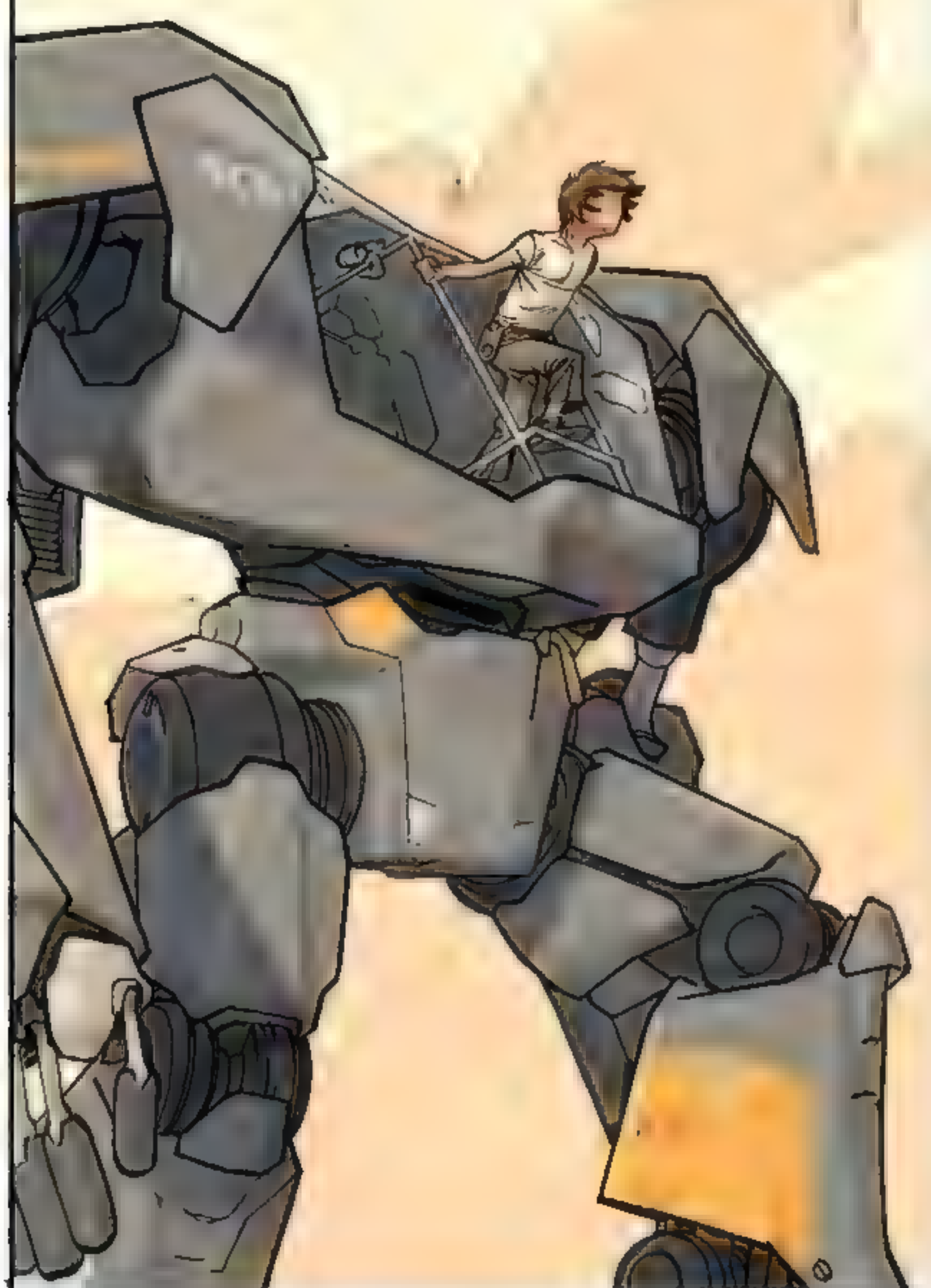
AND ESPECIALLY, BECAUSE OF THIS...



THE PARSIFAL.

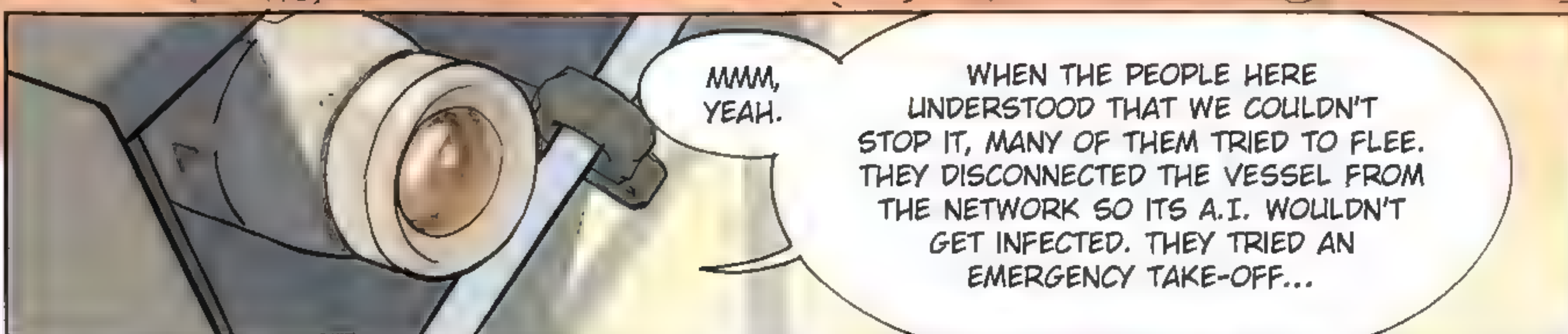
IT BROUGHT
ME OUT HERE.
IT'S BEEN TWENTY
YEARS...

IS IT HAIVE
WHO DID
THIS?



MMM,
YEAH.

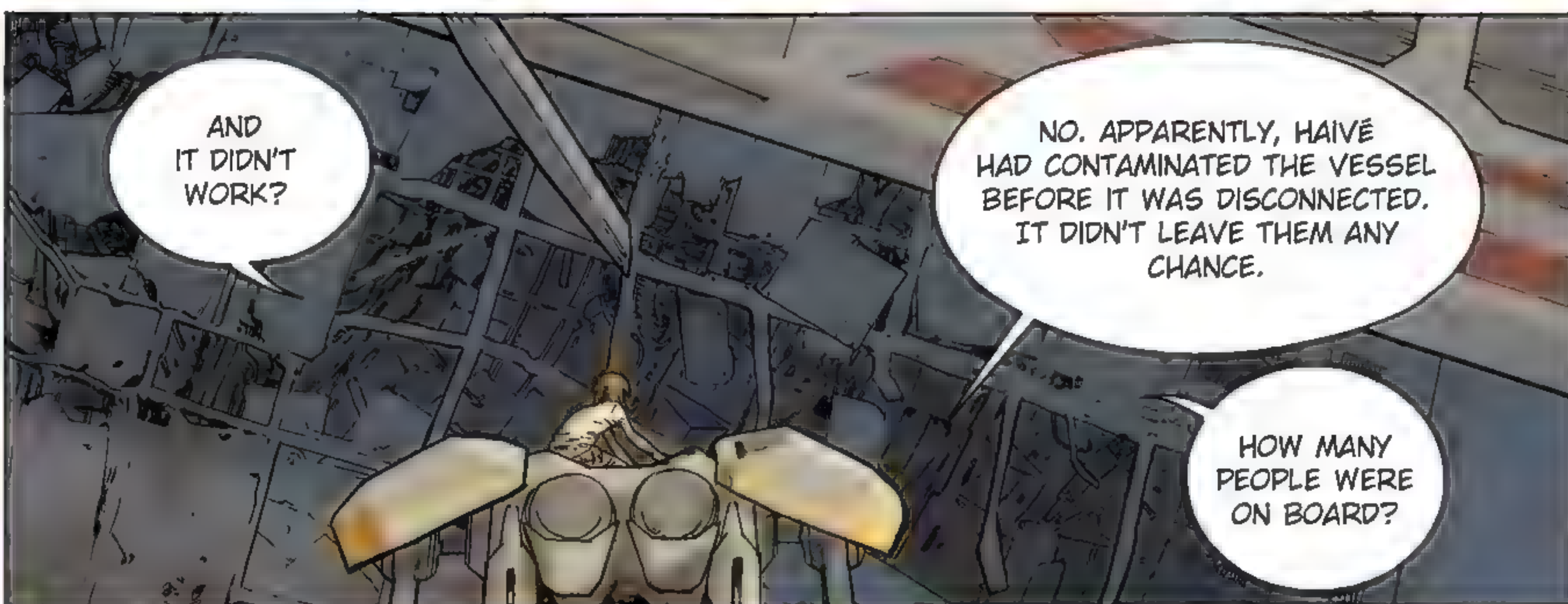
WHEN THE PEOPLE HERE
UNDERSTOOD THAT WE COULDN'T
STOP IT, MANY OF THEM TRIED TO FLEE.
THEY DISCONNECTED THE VESSEL FROM
THE NETWORK SO ITS A.I. WOULDN'T
GET INFECTED. THEY TRIED AN
EMERGENCY TAKE-OFF...



AND
IT DIDN'T
WORK?

NO. APPARENTLY, HAIVE
HAD CONTAMINATED THE VESSEL
BEFORE IT WAS DISCONNECTED.
IT DIDN'T LEAVE THEM ANY
CHANCE.

HOW MANY
PEOPLE WERE
ON BOARD?



NO IDEA. A THOUSAND?
TWO THOUSAND?

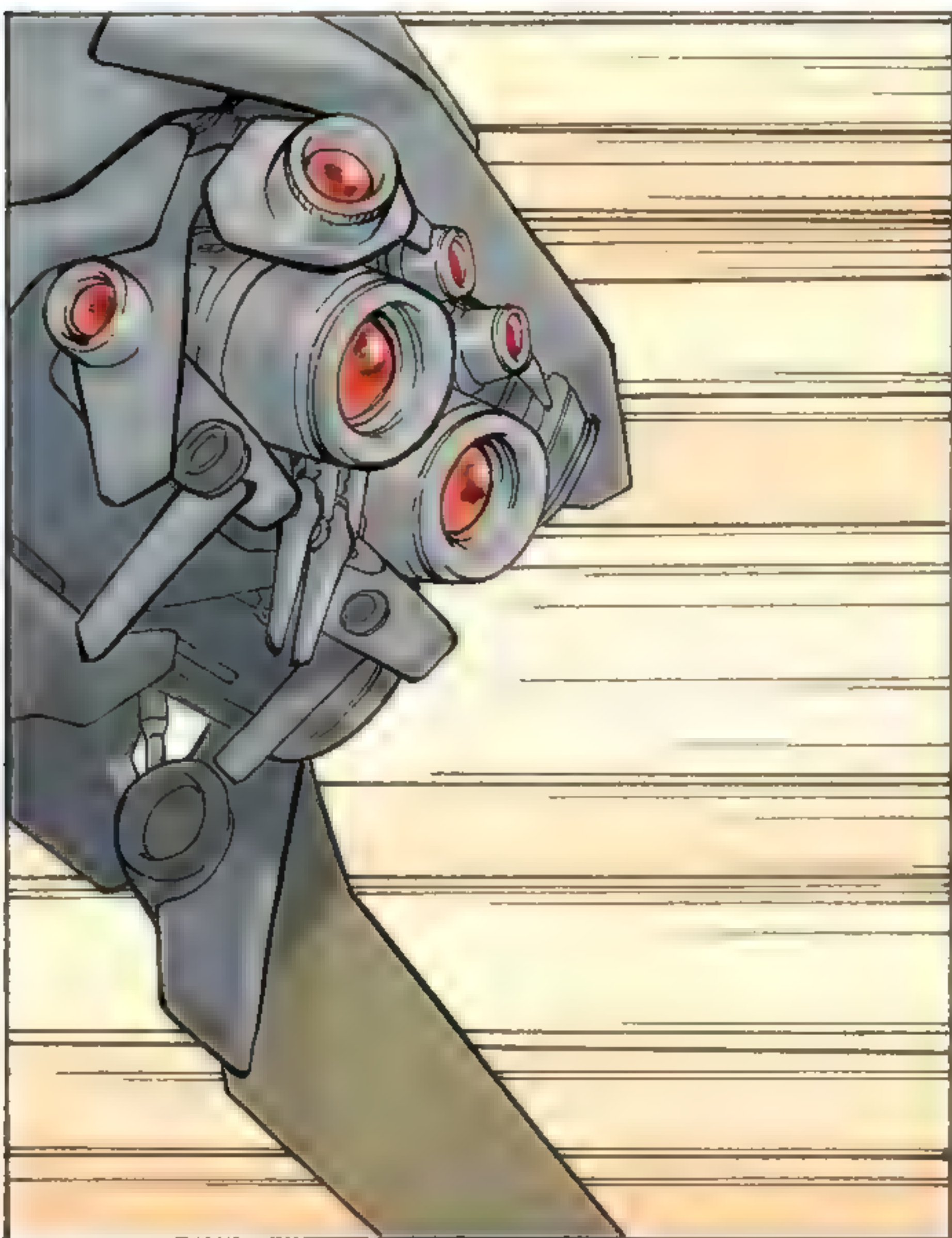
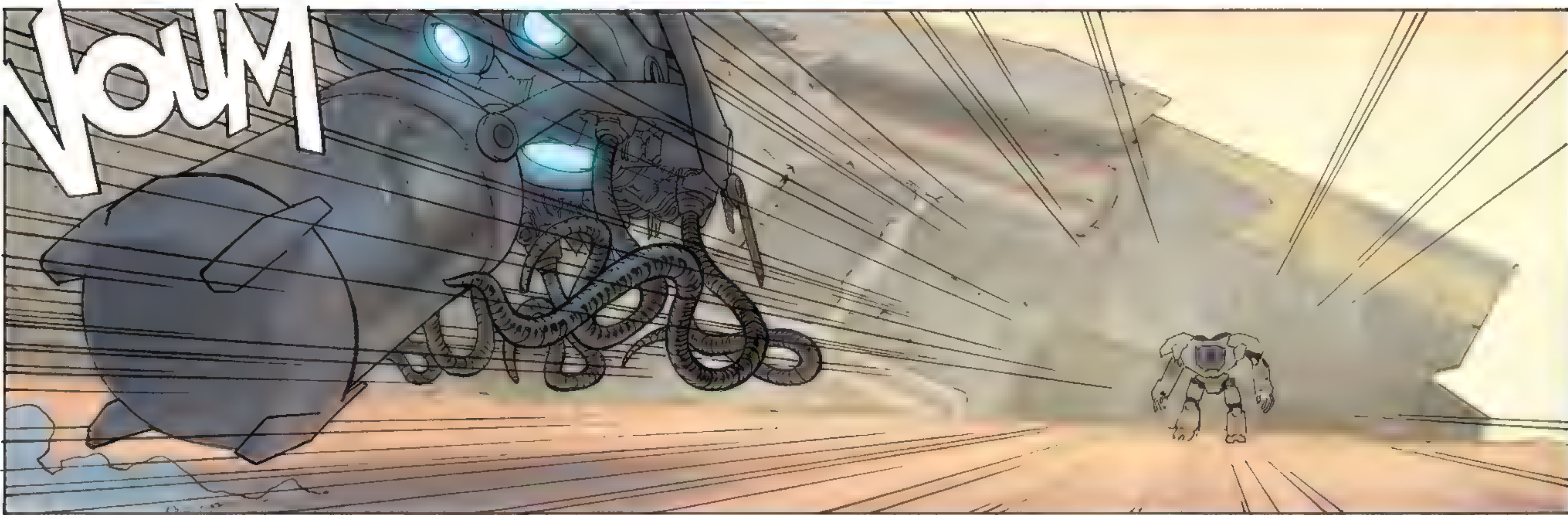
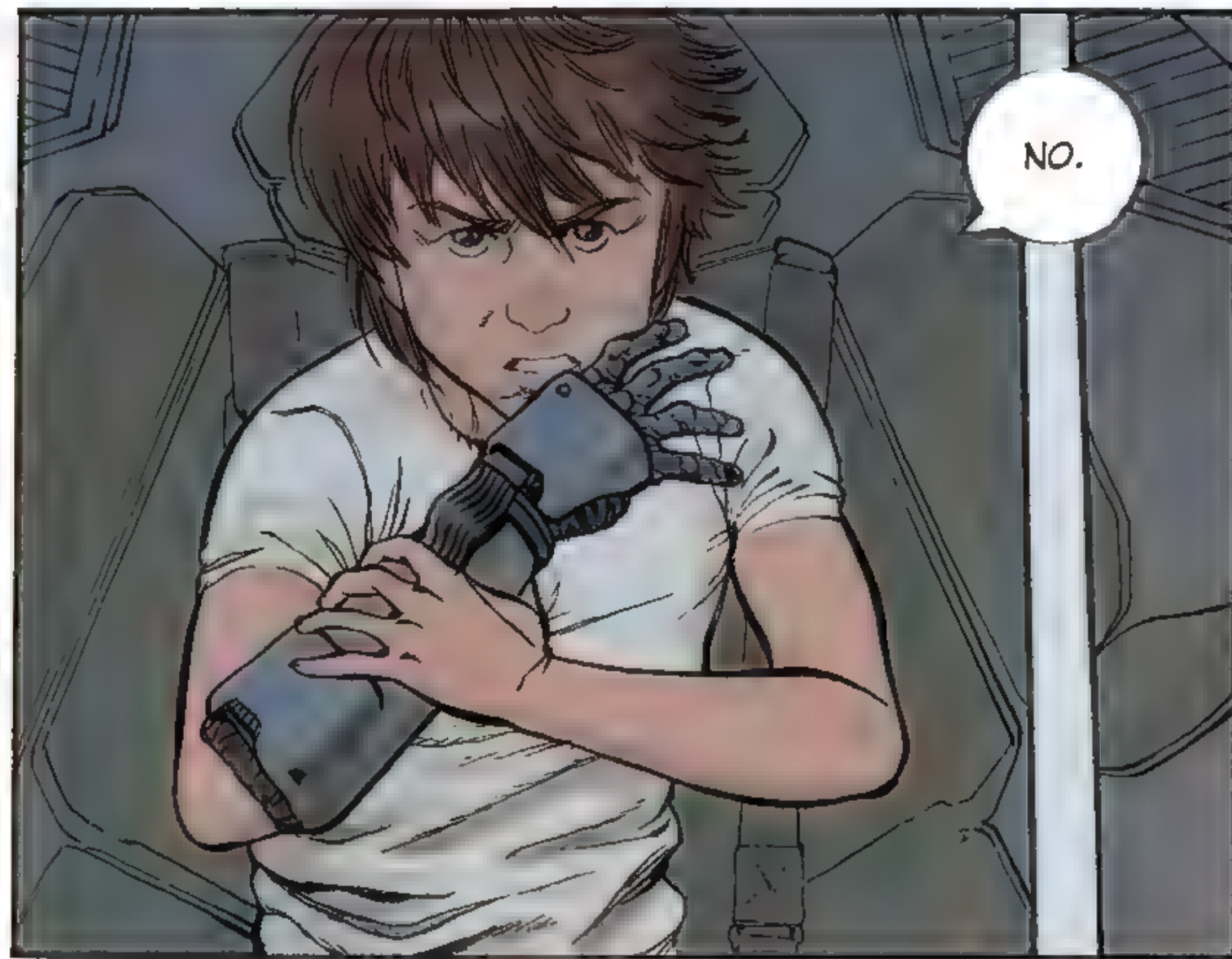
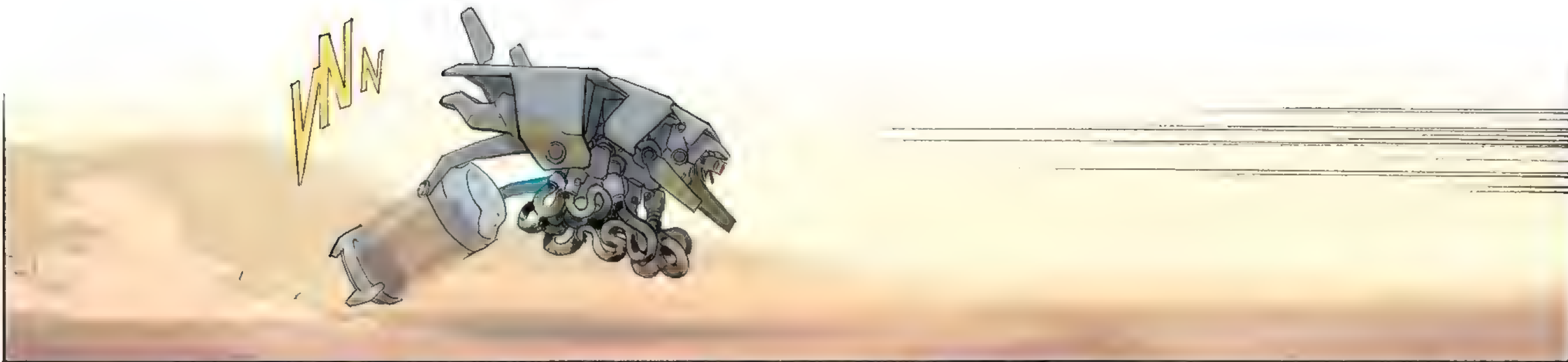
IN ANY CASE, I THINK
EARTH GOT THE MESSAGE.
AN A.I. THAT DESTROYED A
VESSEL IN-FLIGHT, THAT KINDA
KILLED THEIR DESIRE
TO COME SAVE US...

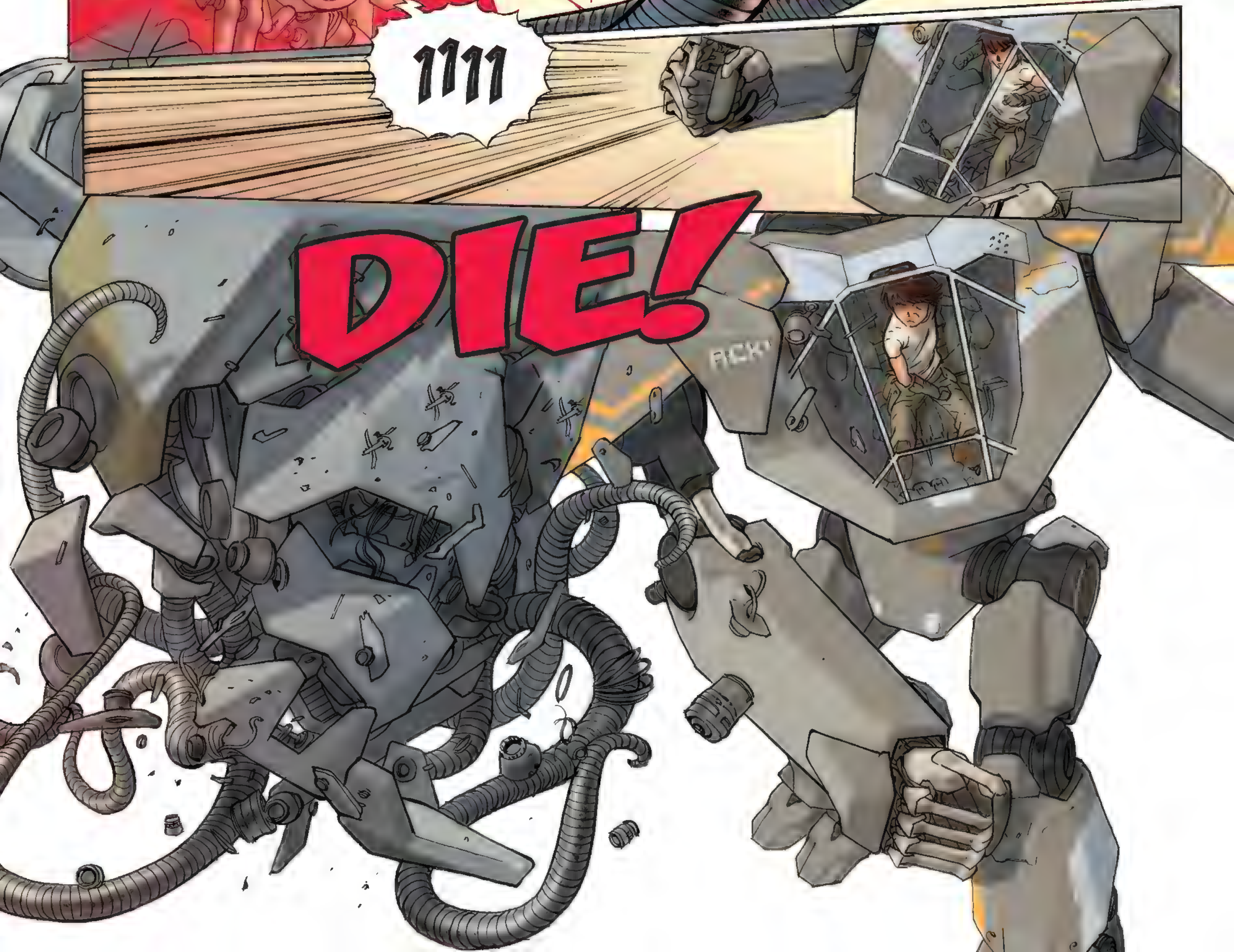
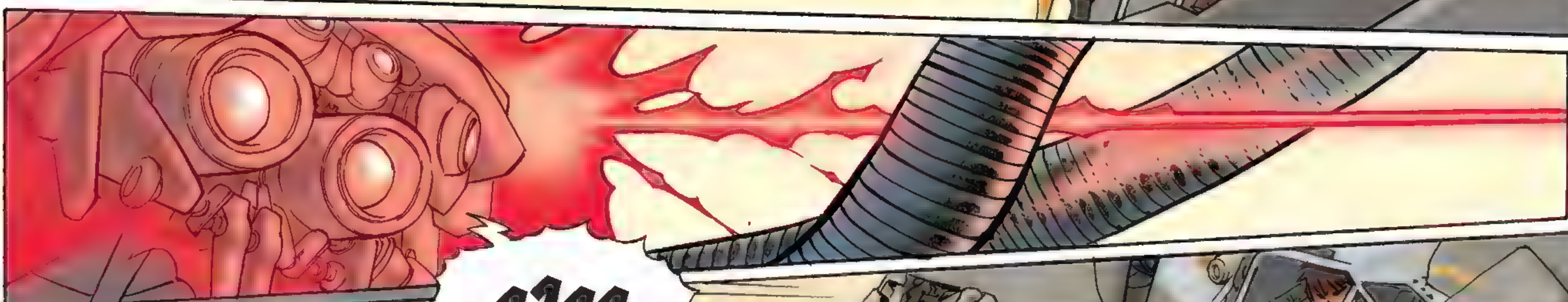
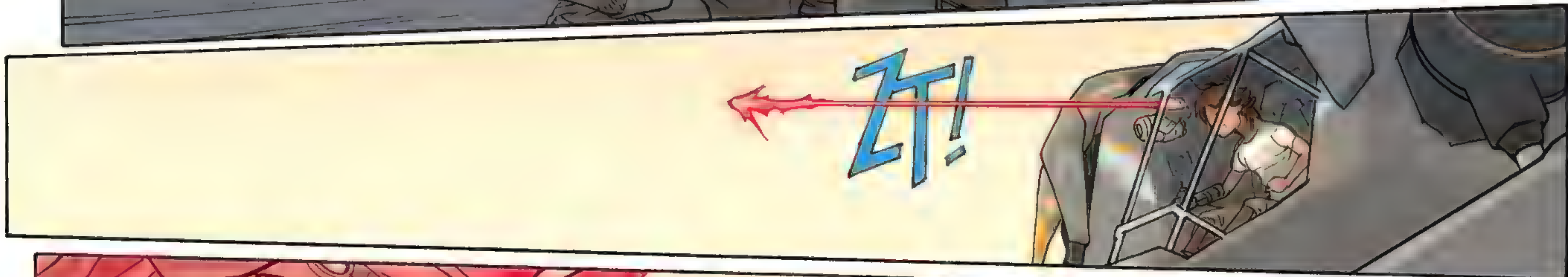
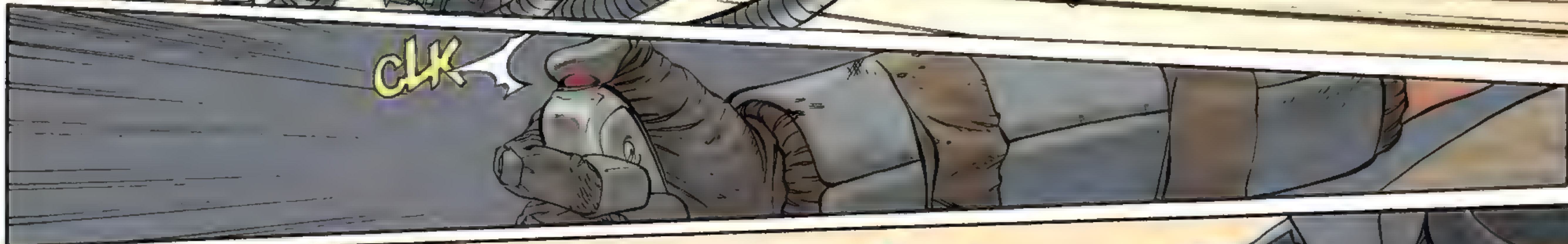
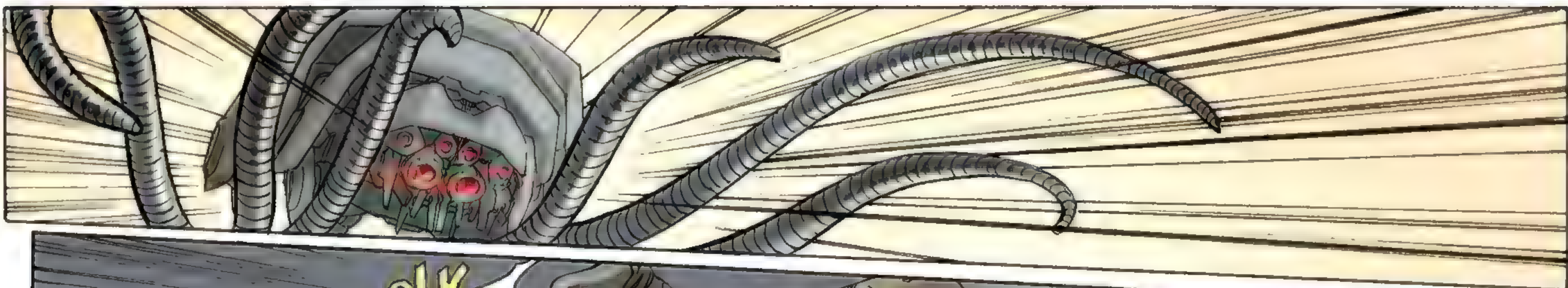
AND HERE, ON
CALDORIA... IS THERE
A LOT OF PEOPLE
LEFT?

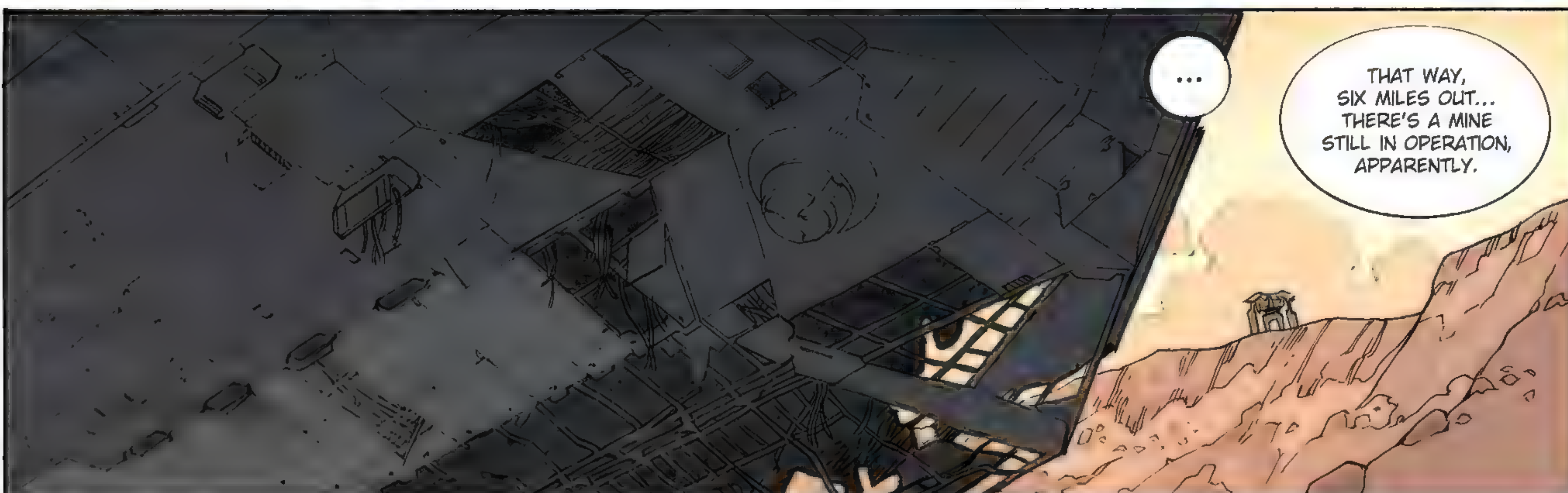
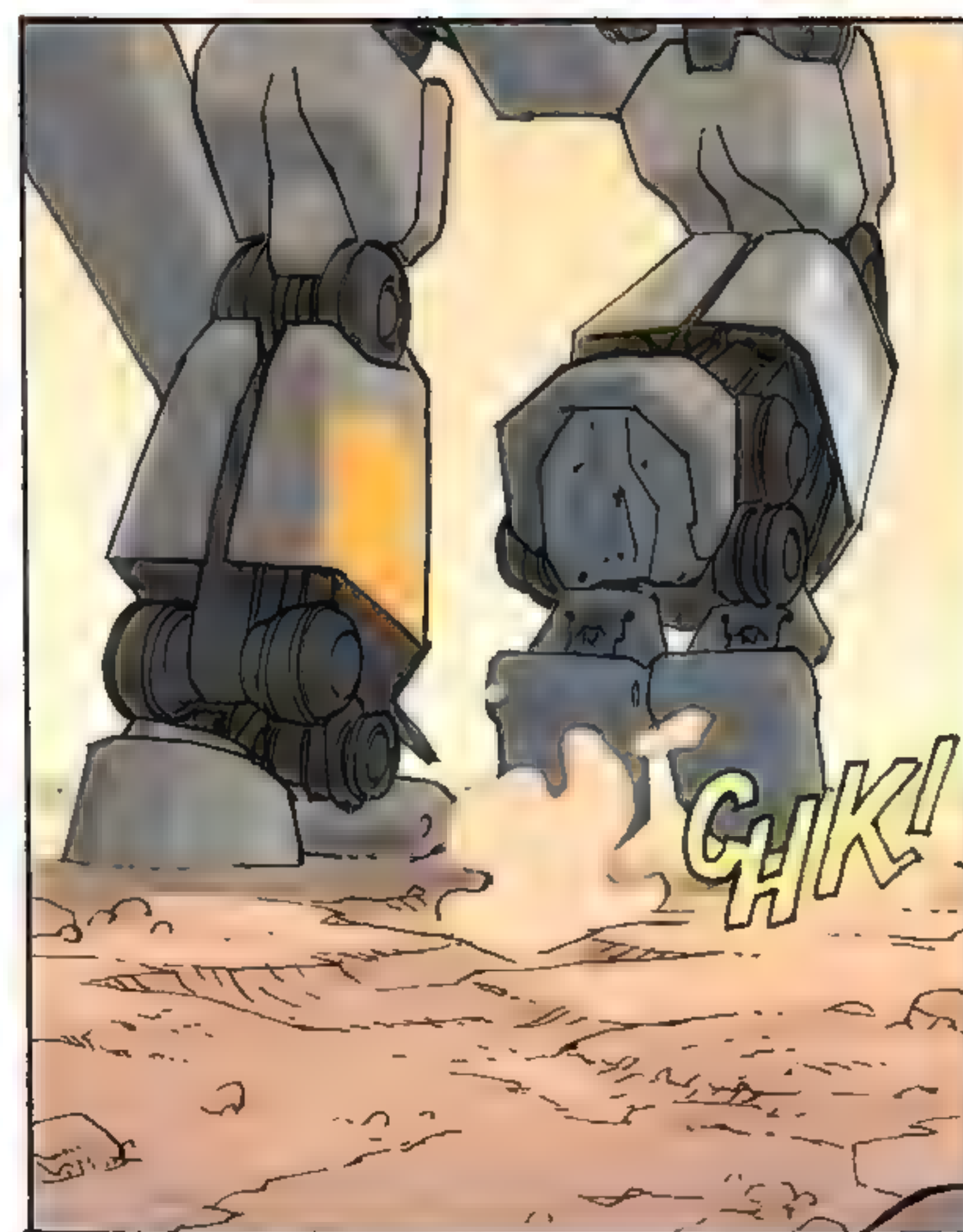
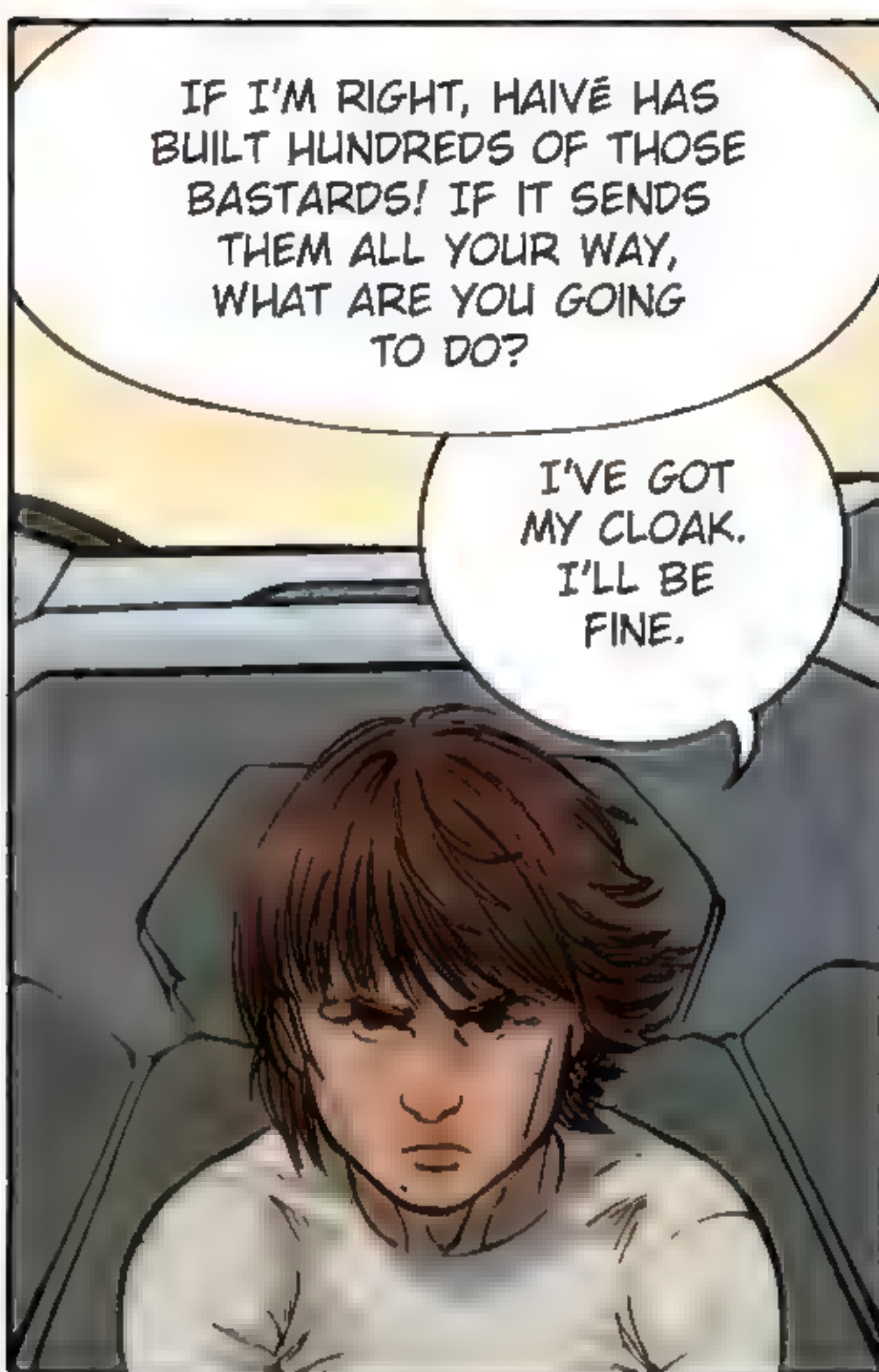
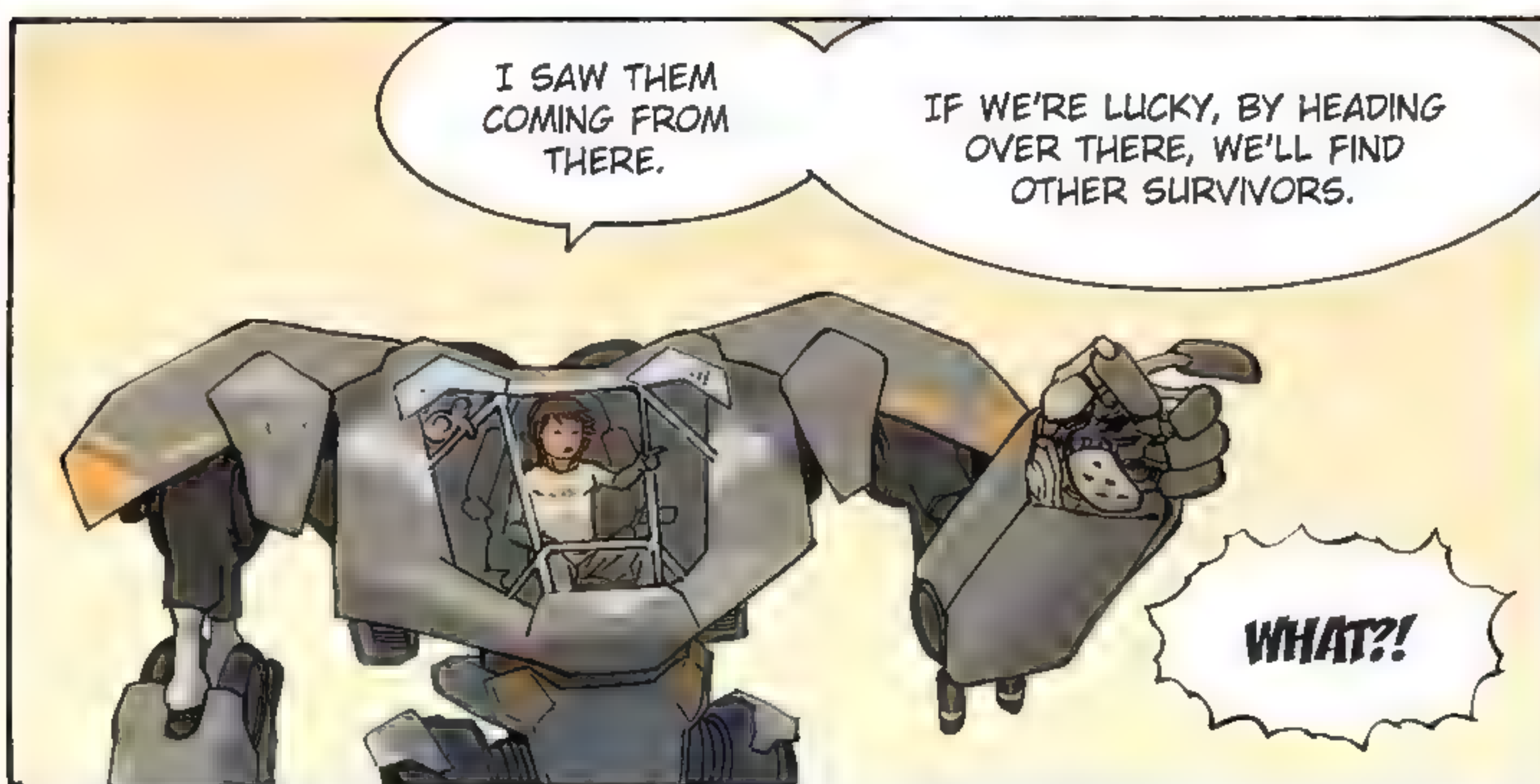
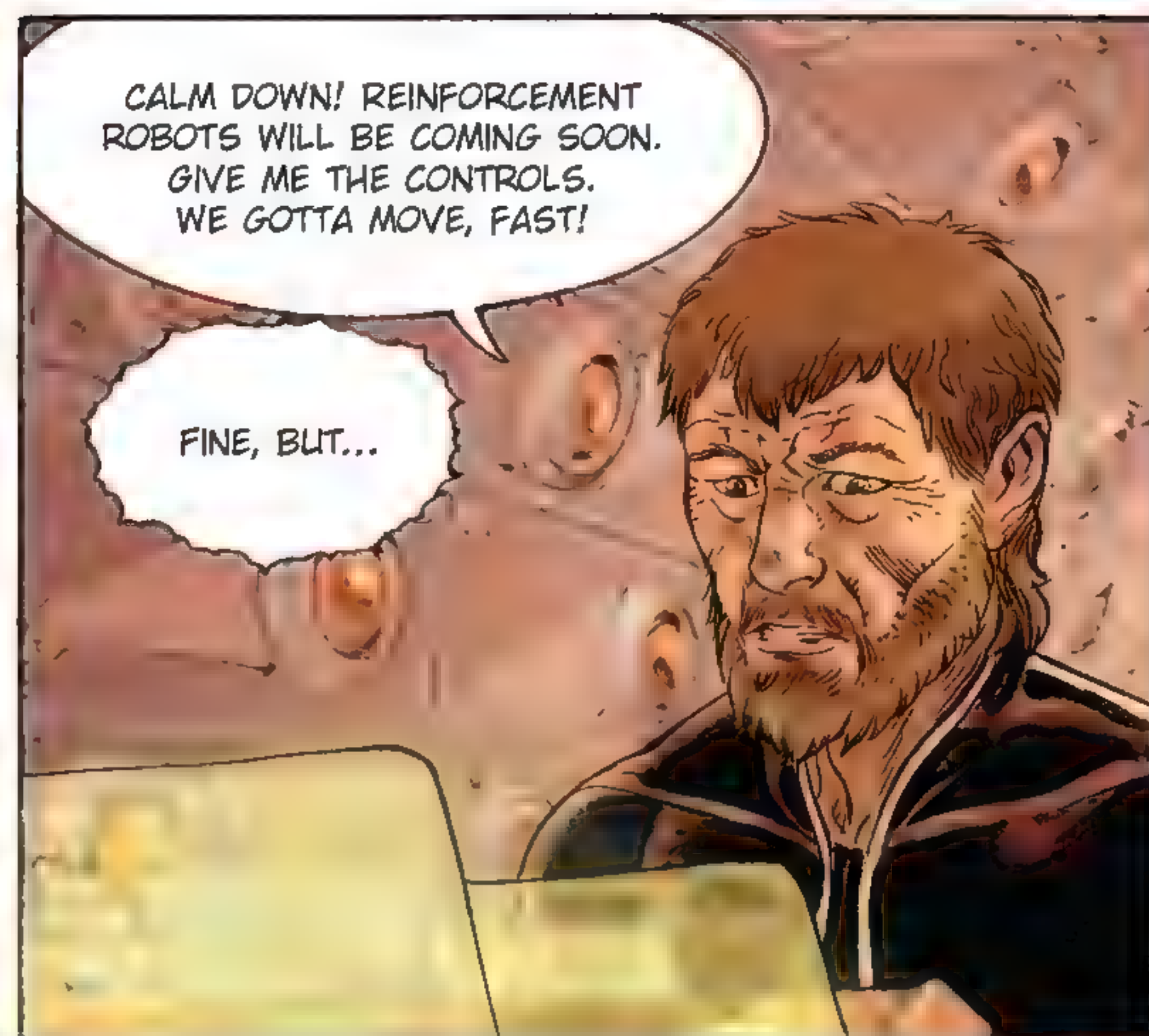
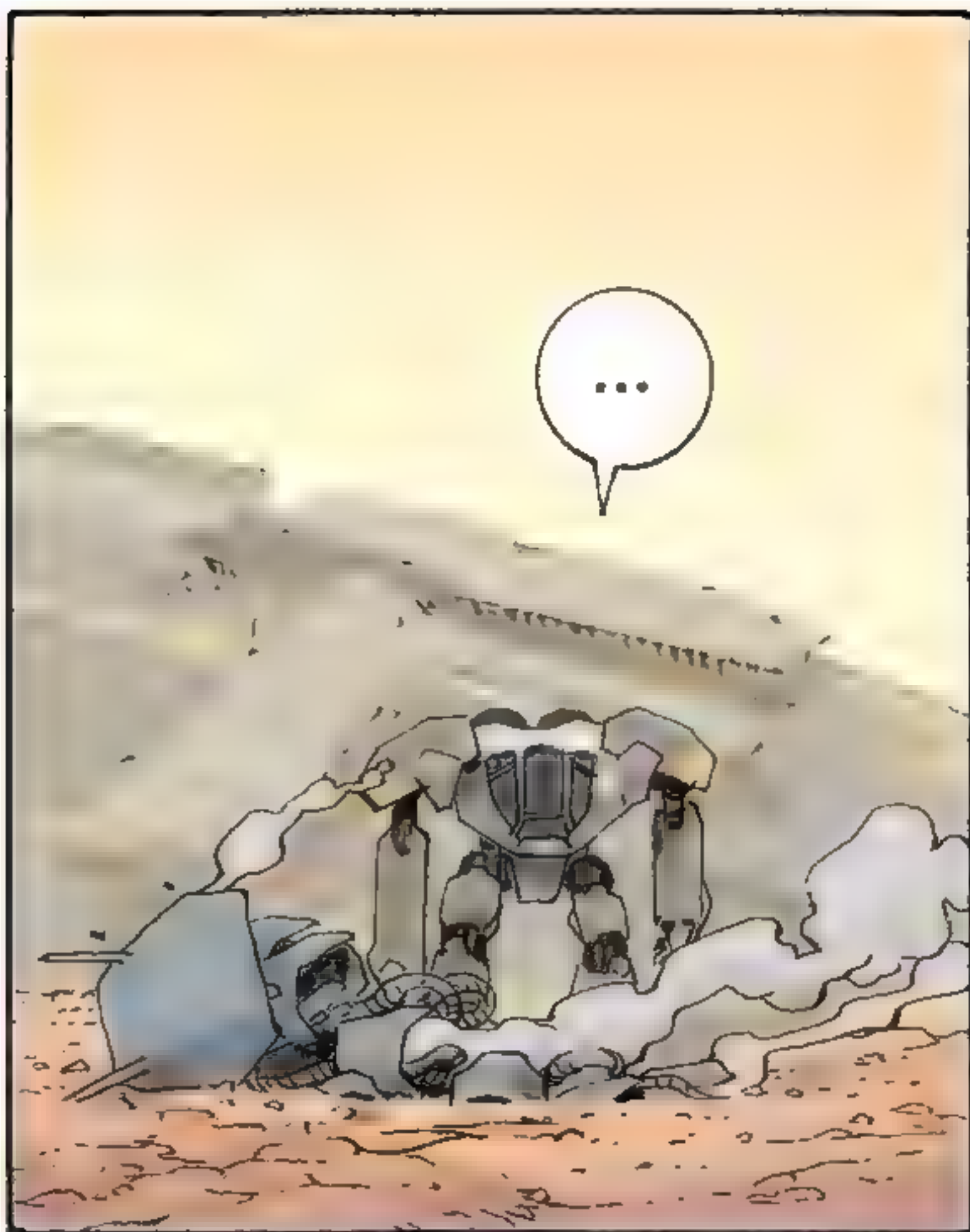
ONE MOMENT,
I'M PICKING
UP A SIGNAL.

PUT YOUR
CLOAK ON,
QUICK!









I THINK
THAT'S IT.

DO YOU SEE ANY
HUMANS?

HARD TO SAY.
MAYBE IF I TOOK
MY CLOAK OFF...

DON'T GET MAD!
I WAS KIDDING.

STUFF'S MOVING,
AND THERE'S ROBOTS,
I KNOW THAT MUCH.
WE GOTTA HEAD
OVER THERE
DISCREETLY.

YOU COULD ALSO
JUST... NOT GO
THERE AT ALL.

NO. WE
ALREADY
TALKED ABOUT
THIS.

FINE. SO
LONG AS YOU
KEEP THE CLOAK ON,
AND WE KEEP RADIO
COMMS TO A MINIMUM,
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE
TO GET THROUGH,
UNSEEN.

EXCEPT...

I DON'T LIKE THAT
THING.

WHAT
THING?

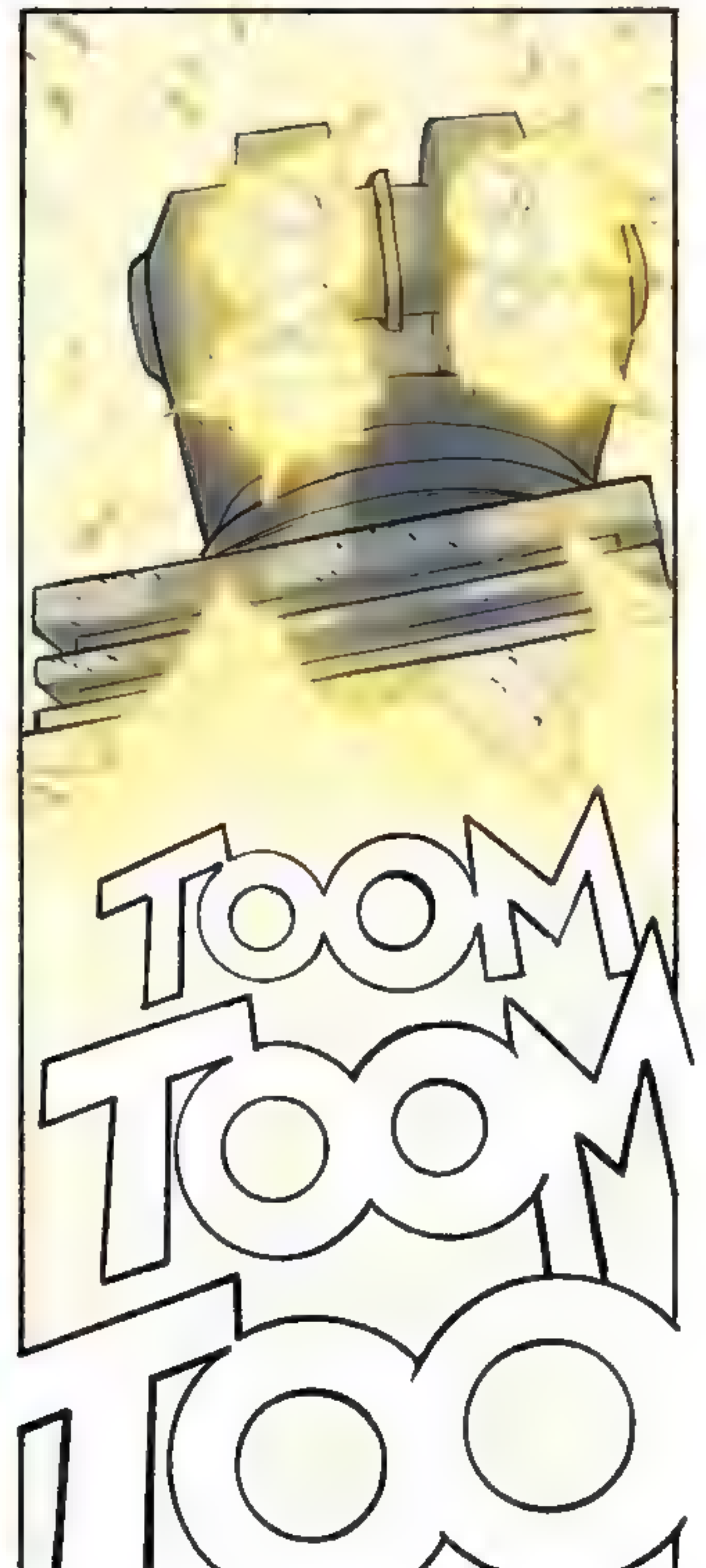
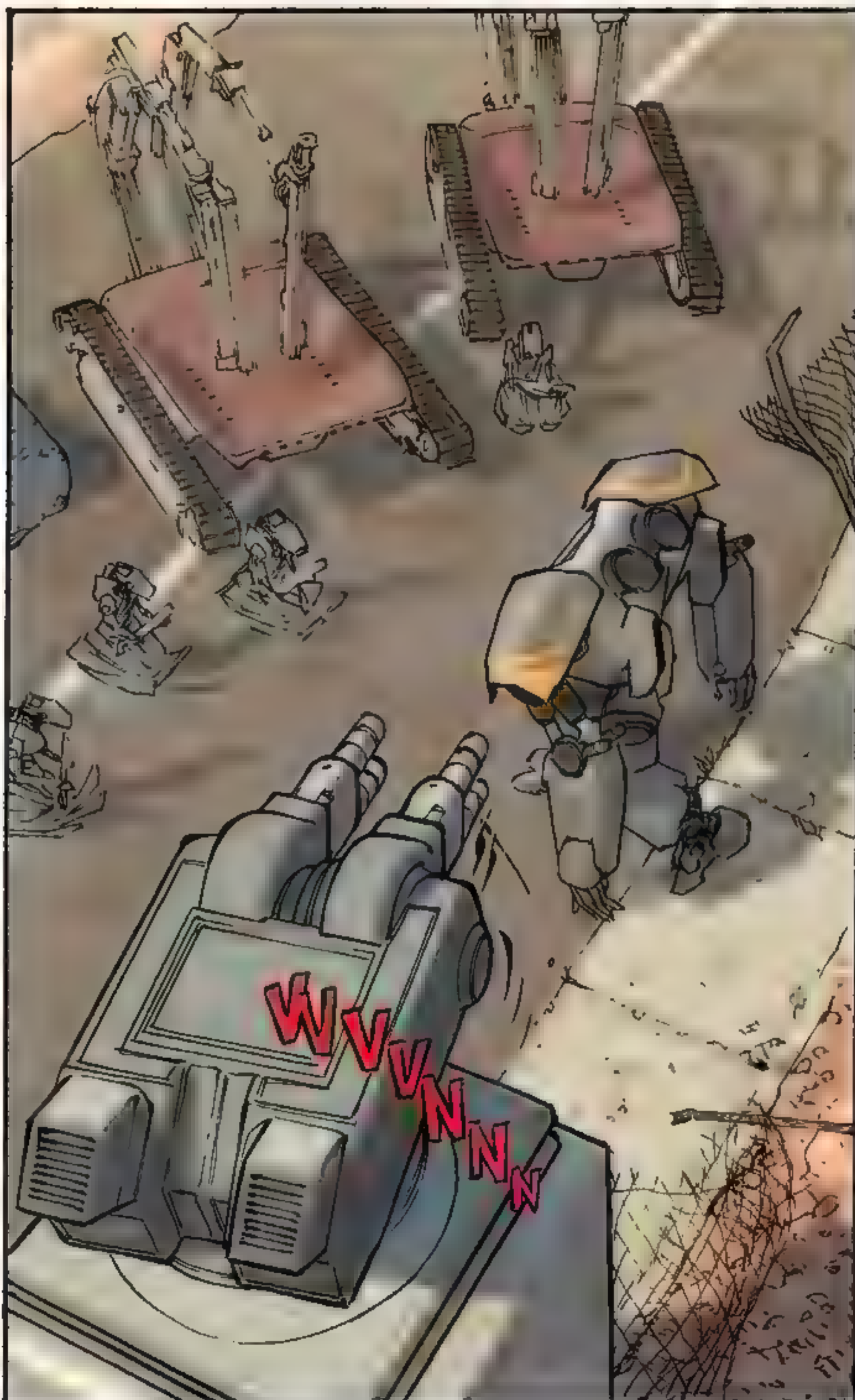
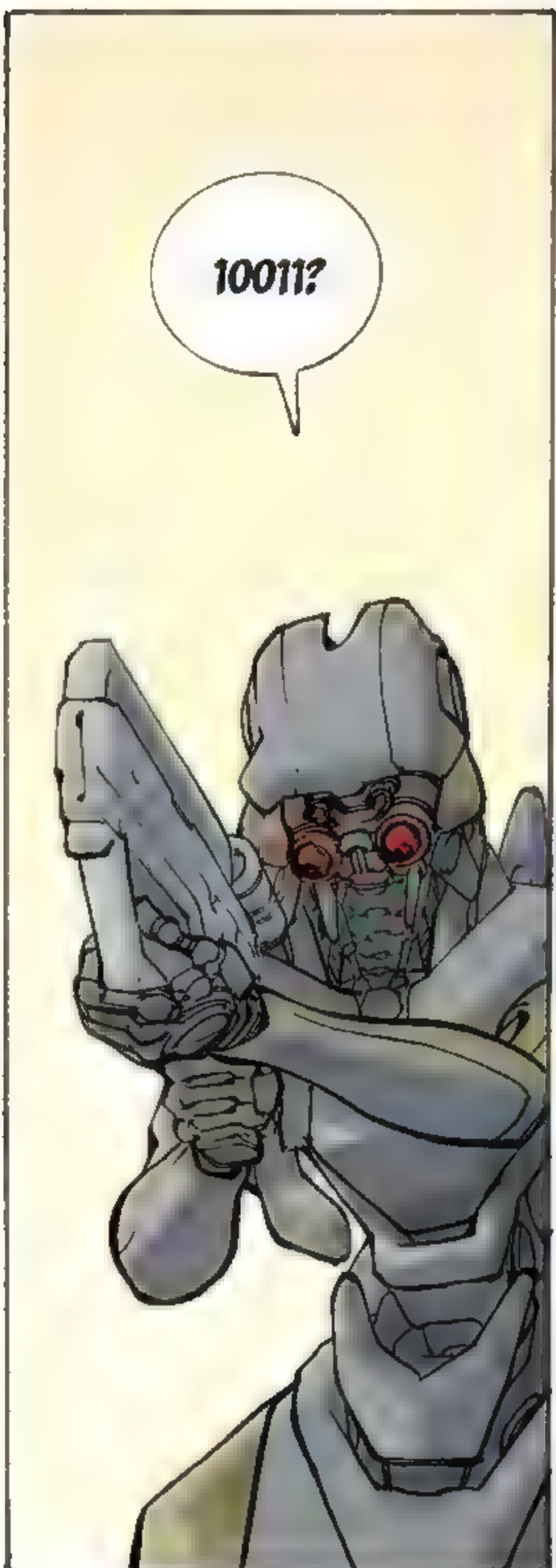
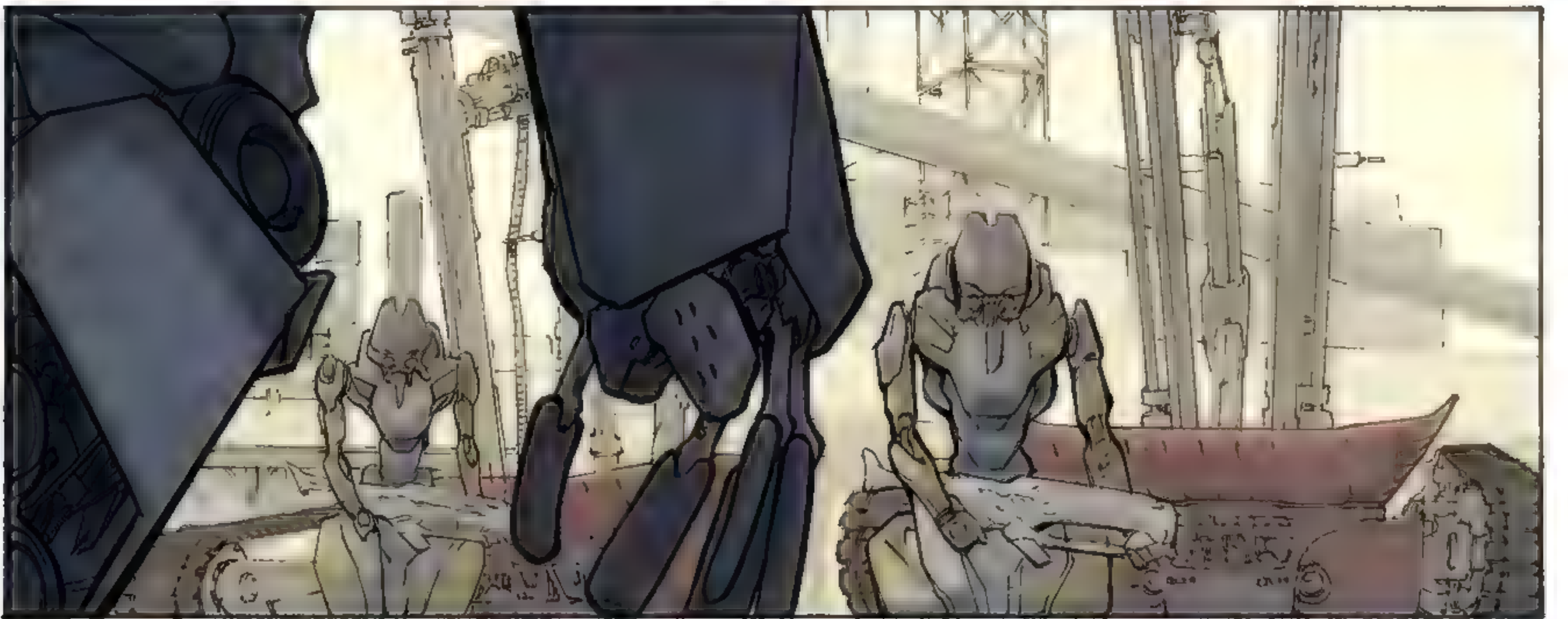
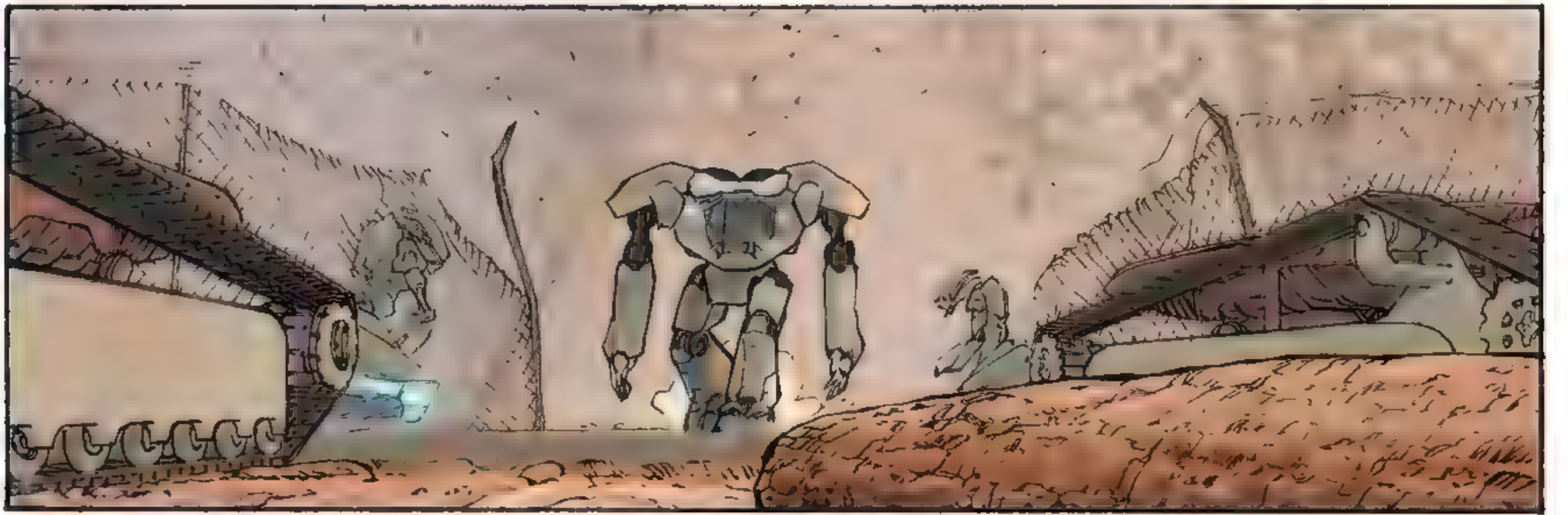
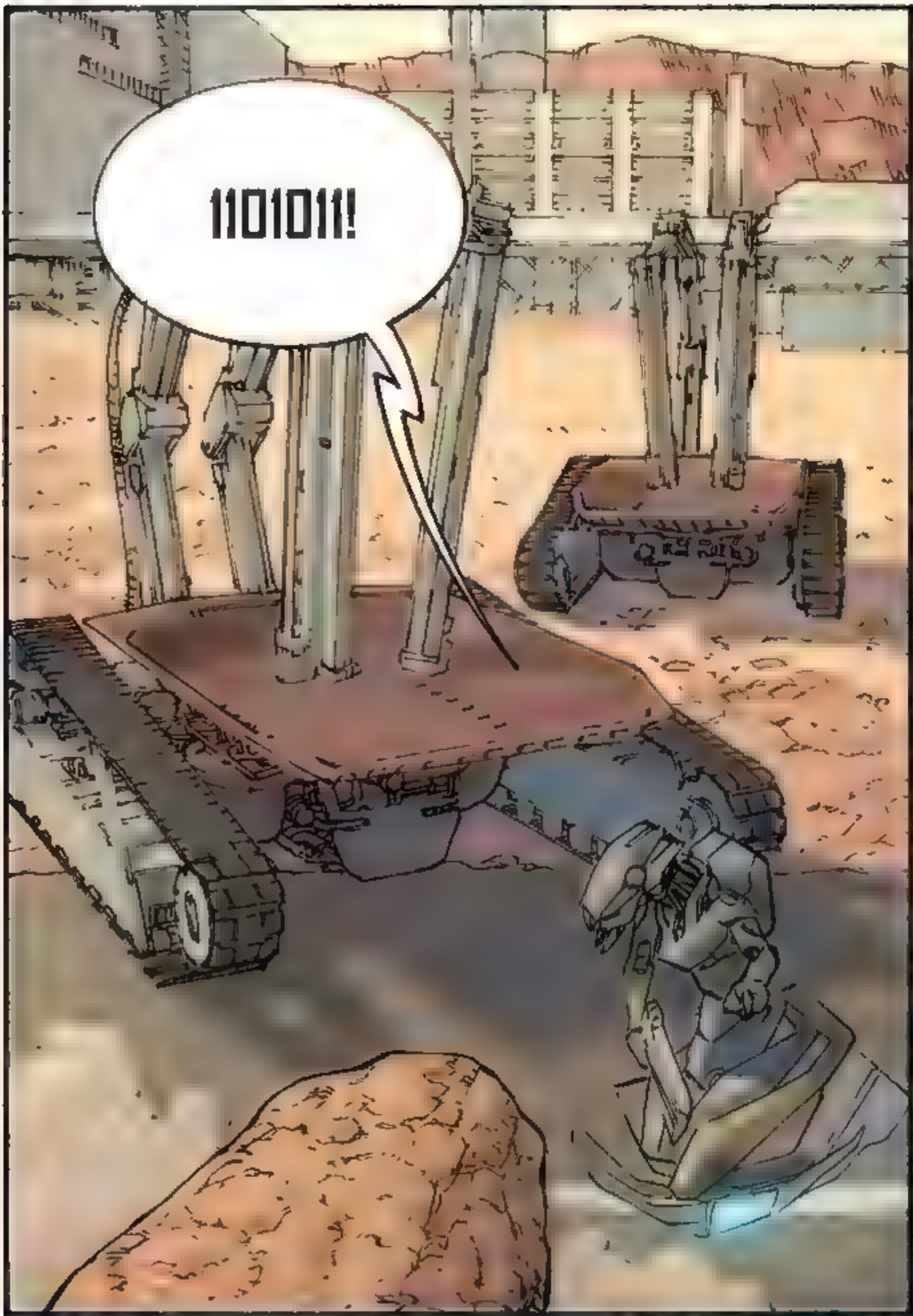
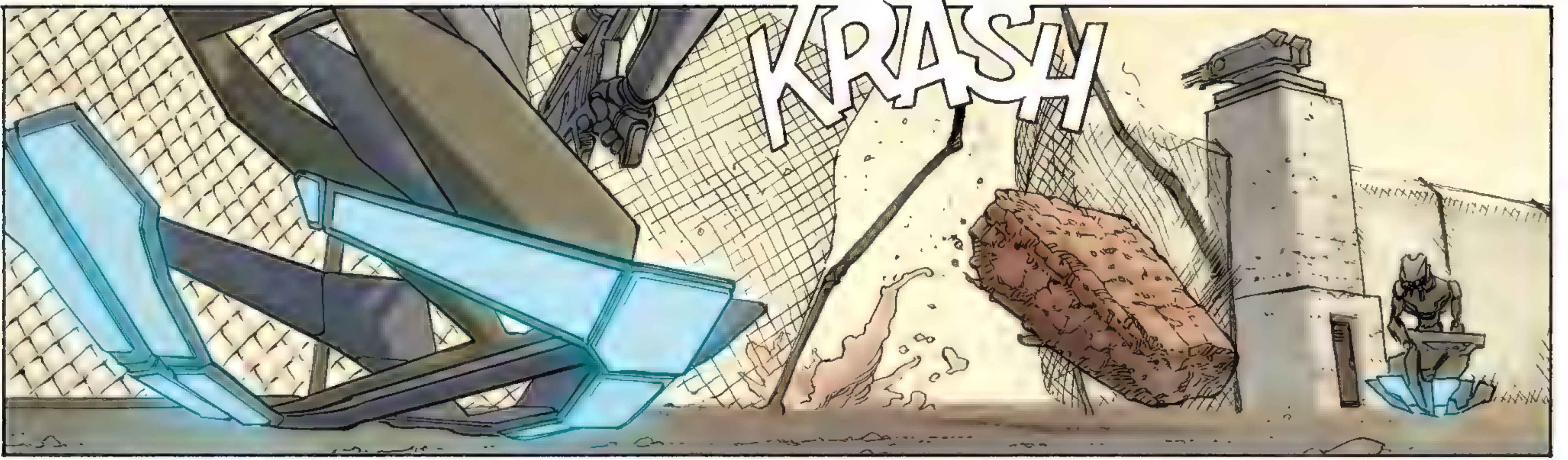
THE WATCHTOWER,
IN THE MIDDLE. H&J WERE
ALWAYS A BIT PARANOID.
WE GOTTA FIND OUT WHAT
KIND OF SENSORS
IT HAS...

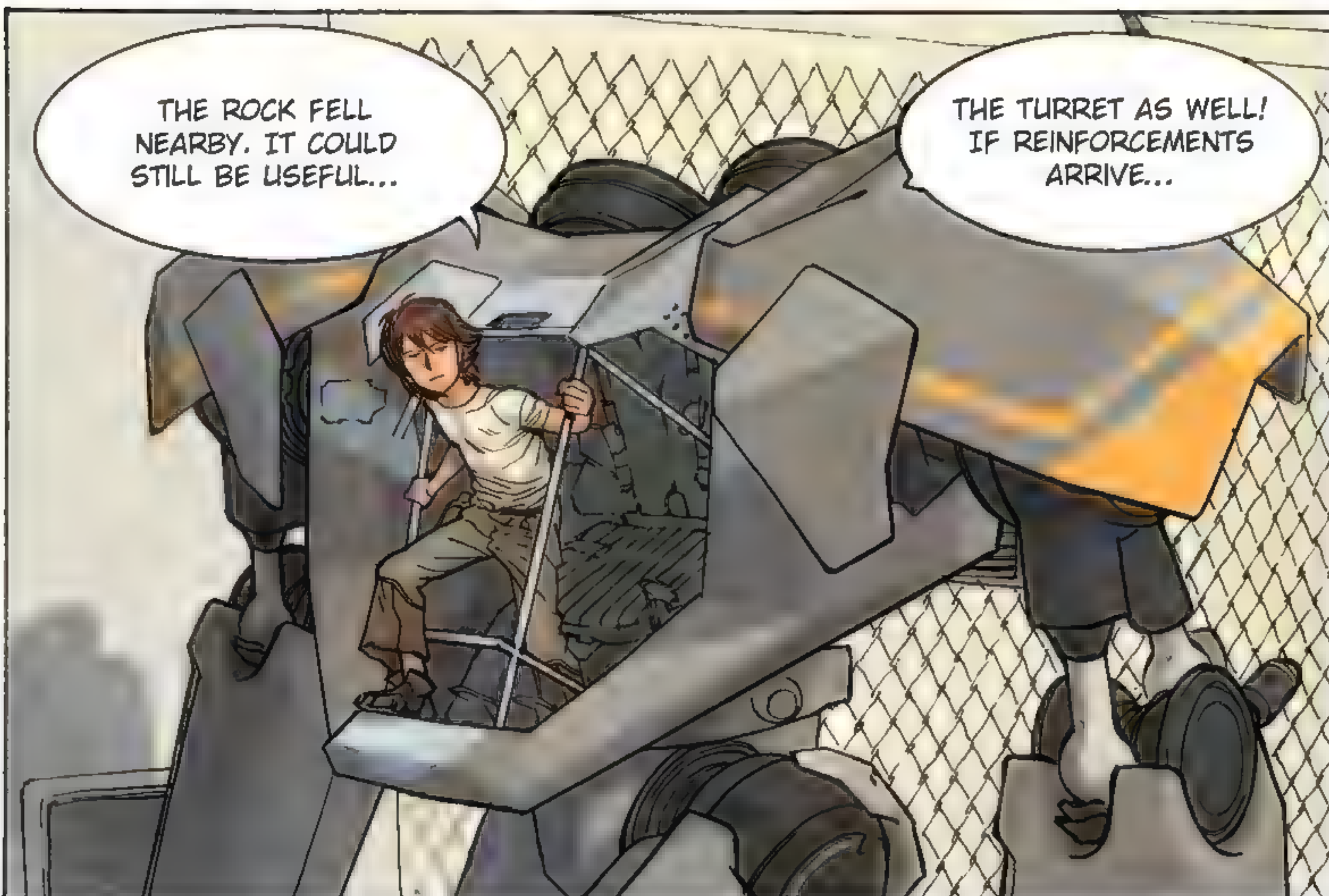
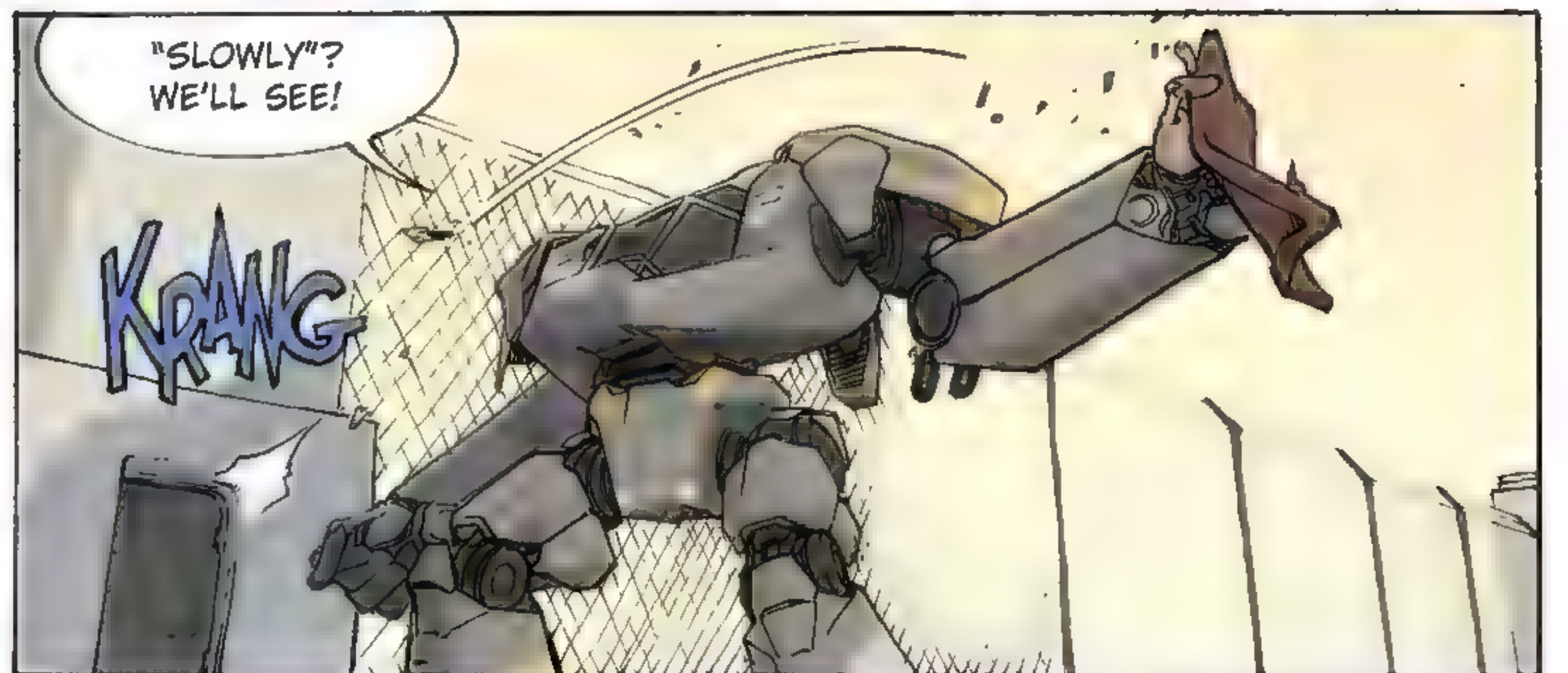
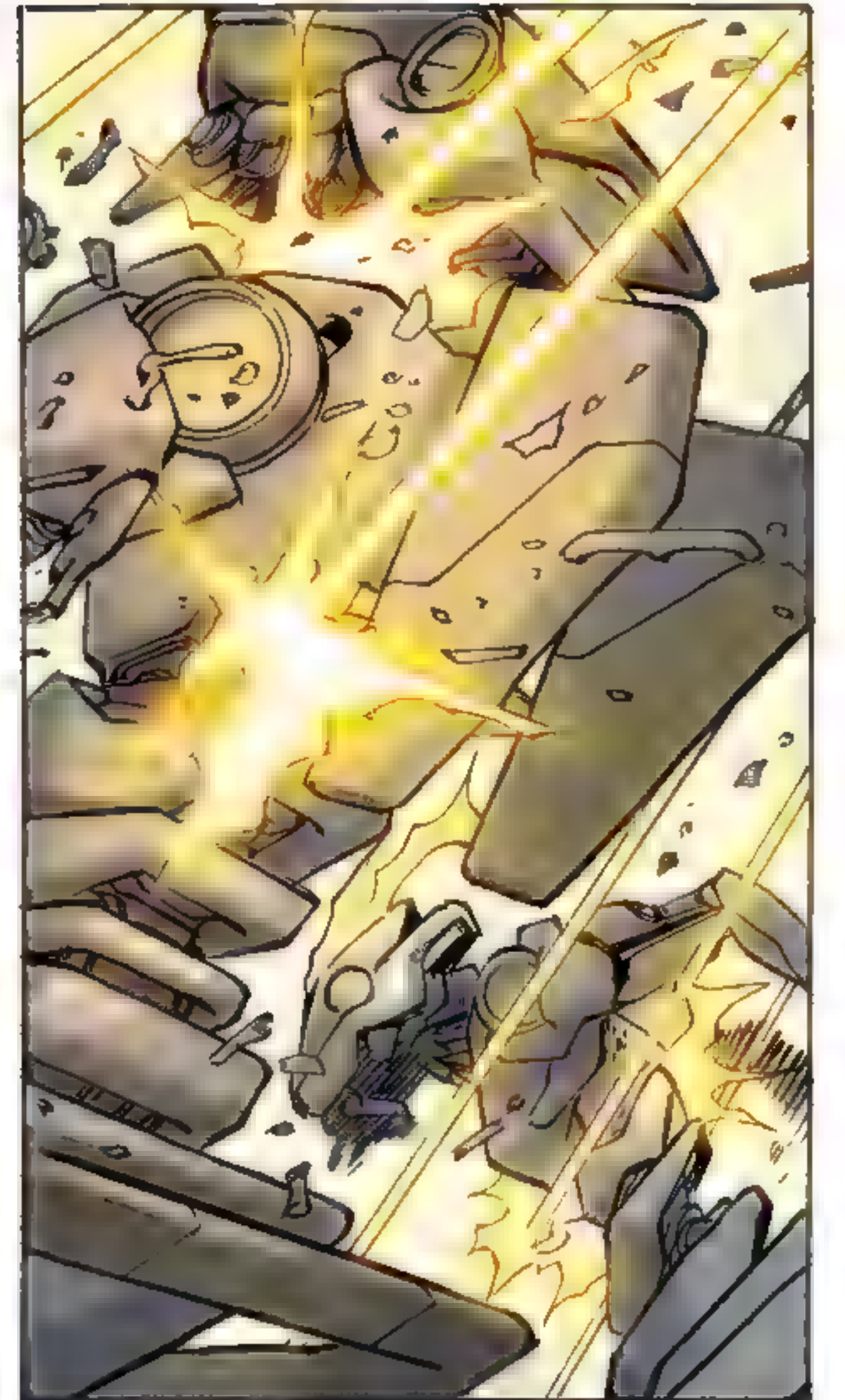
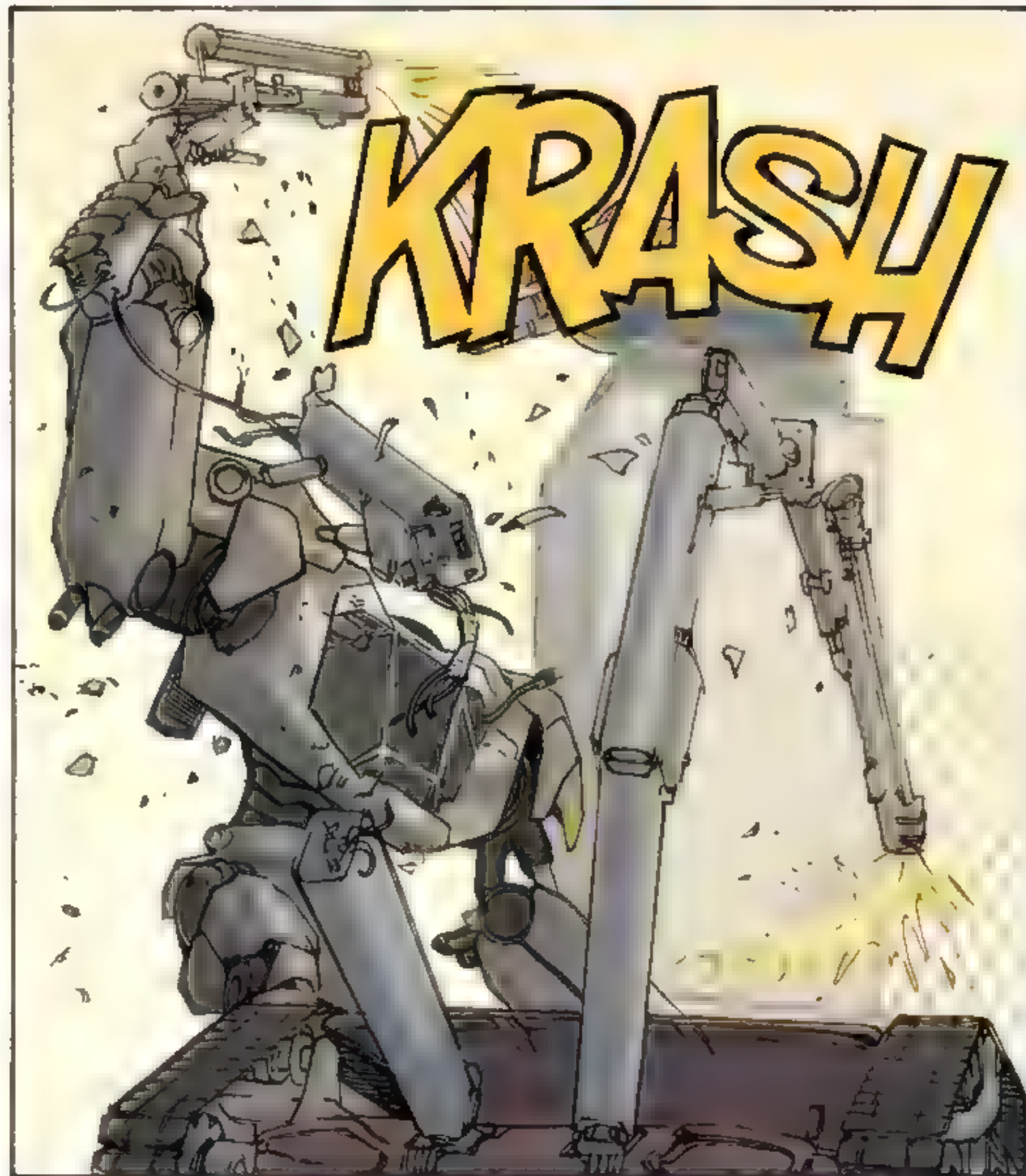
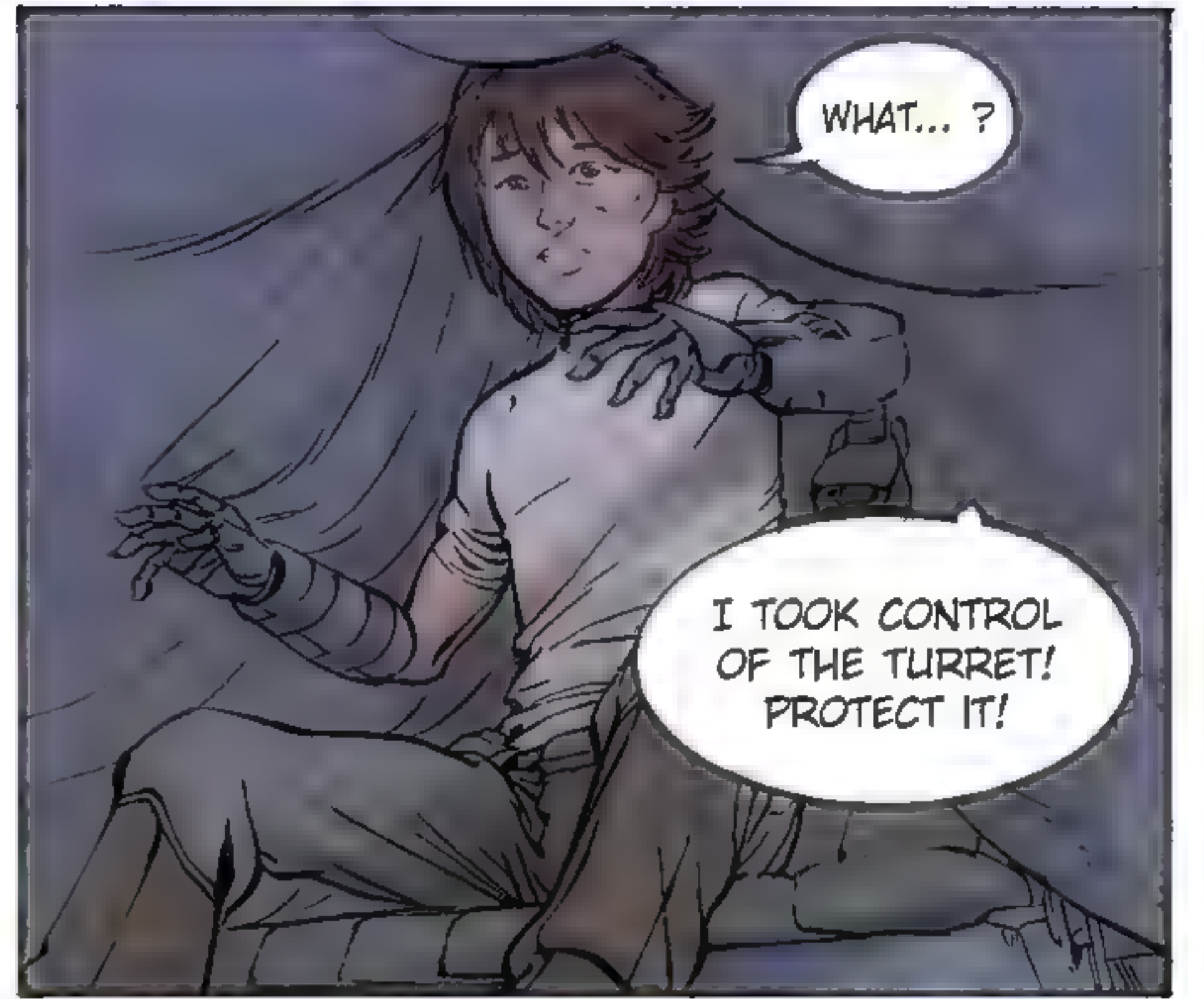
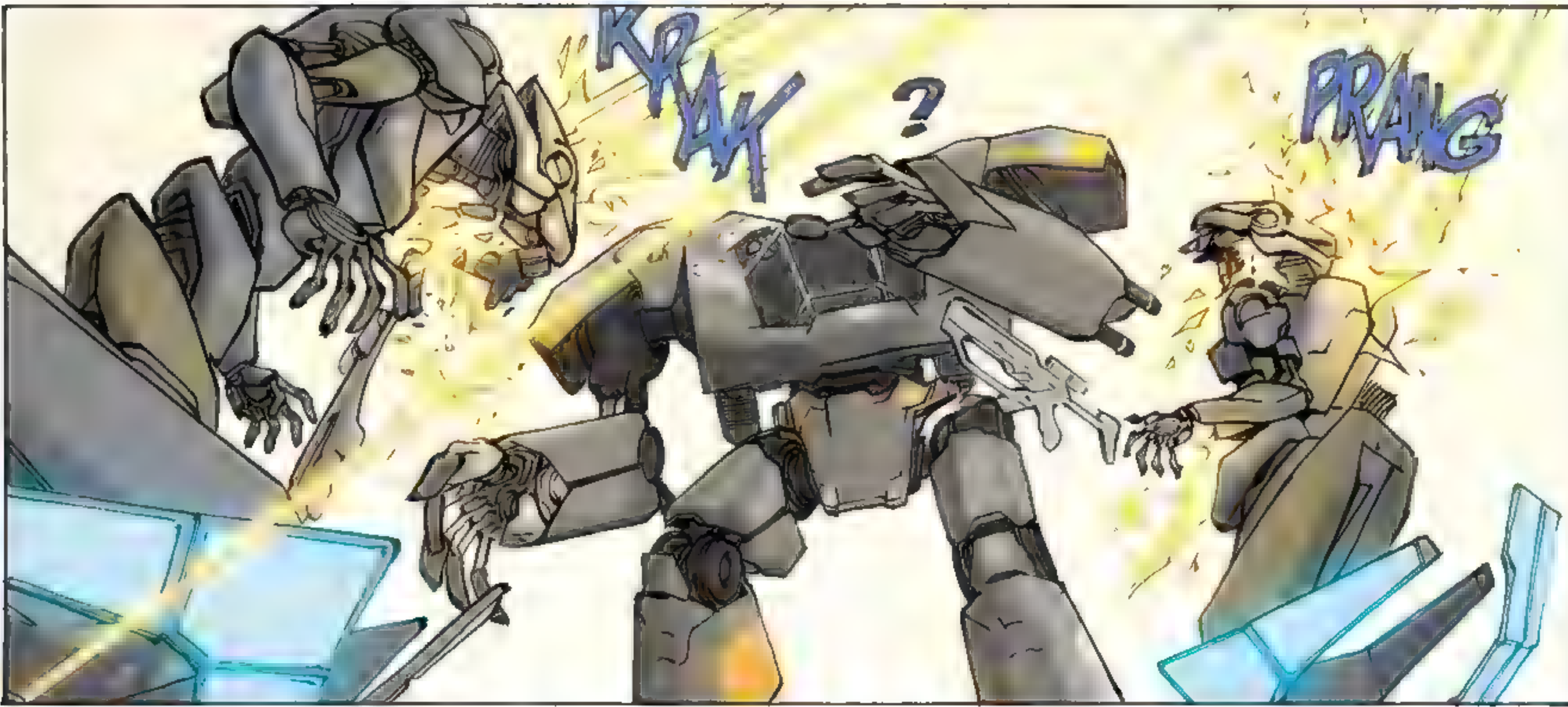
PLUS, THAT
FENCE SURROUNDS
THE WHOLE COMPLEX.
IF YOU BREAK THROUGH
IT, ALL THE ROBOTS IN
THE MINE WILL COME
FOR YOU.

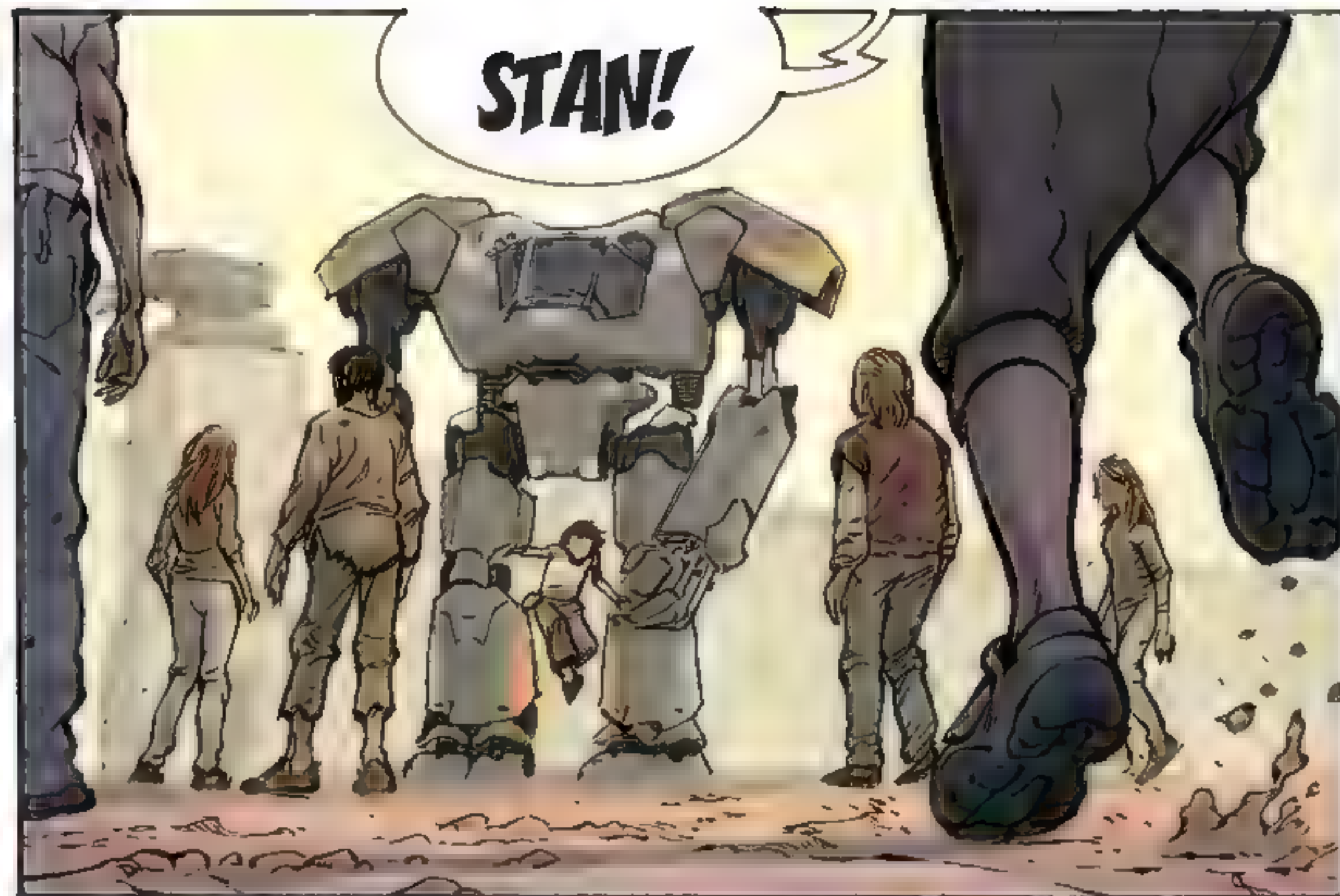
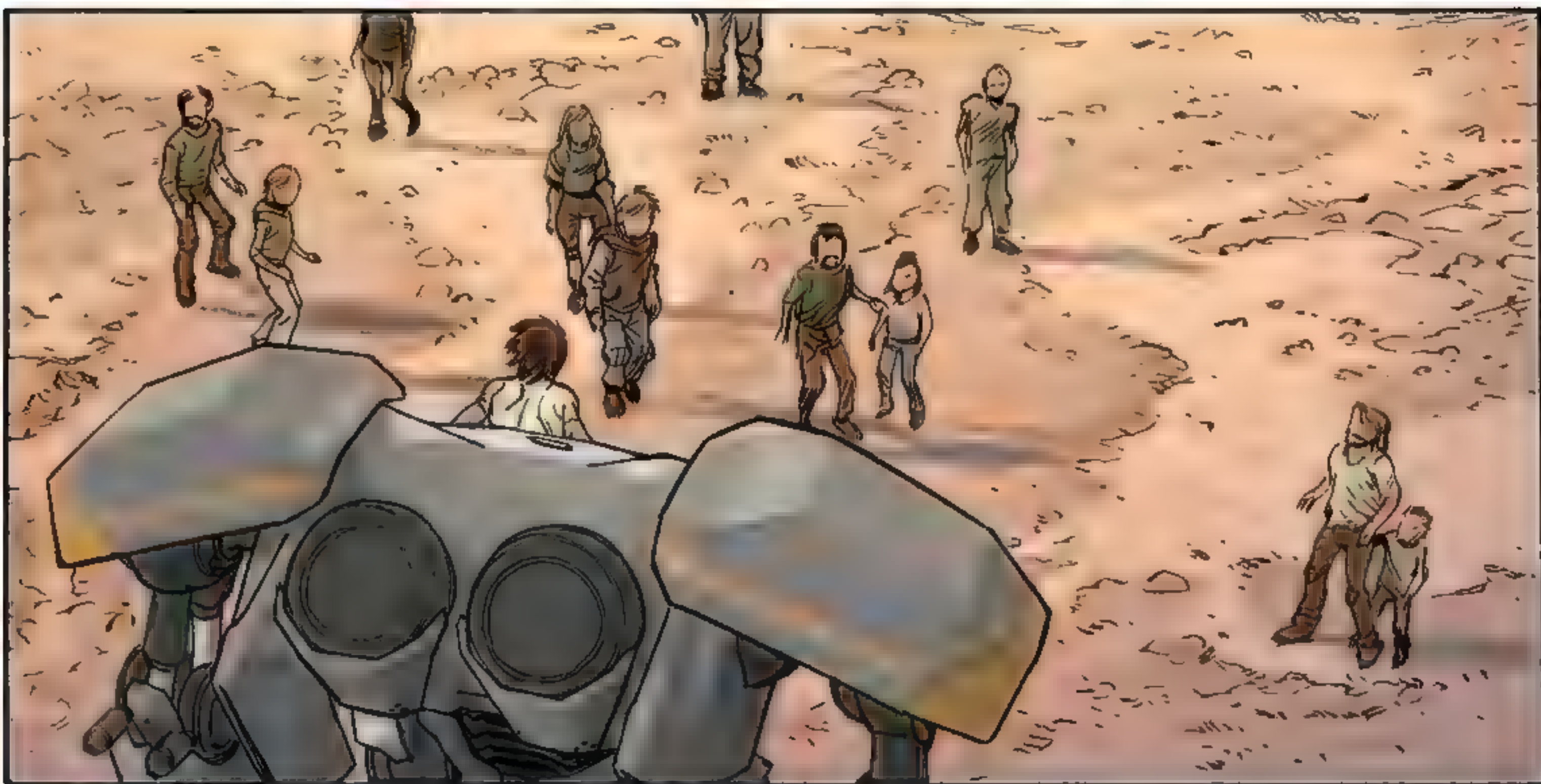
KRKK RR KK

WELL...

MAYBE IF
I CHUCK THIS
FROM FAR
ENOUGH
AWAY...







YOU FOUND US! YOU'RE AMAZING!

WELL... UH... YEAH. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?



DO YOU KNOW HOW TO TURN THAT THING OFF, BY THE WAY?

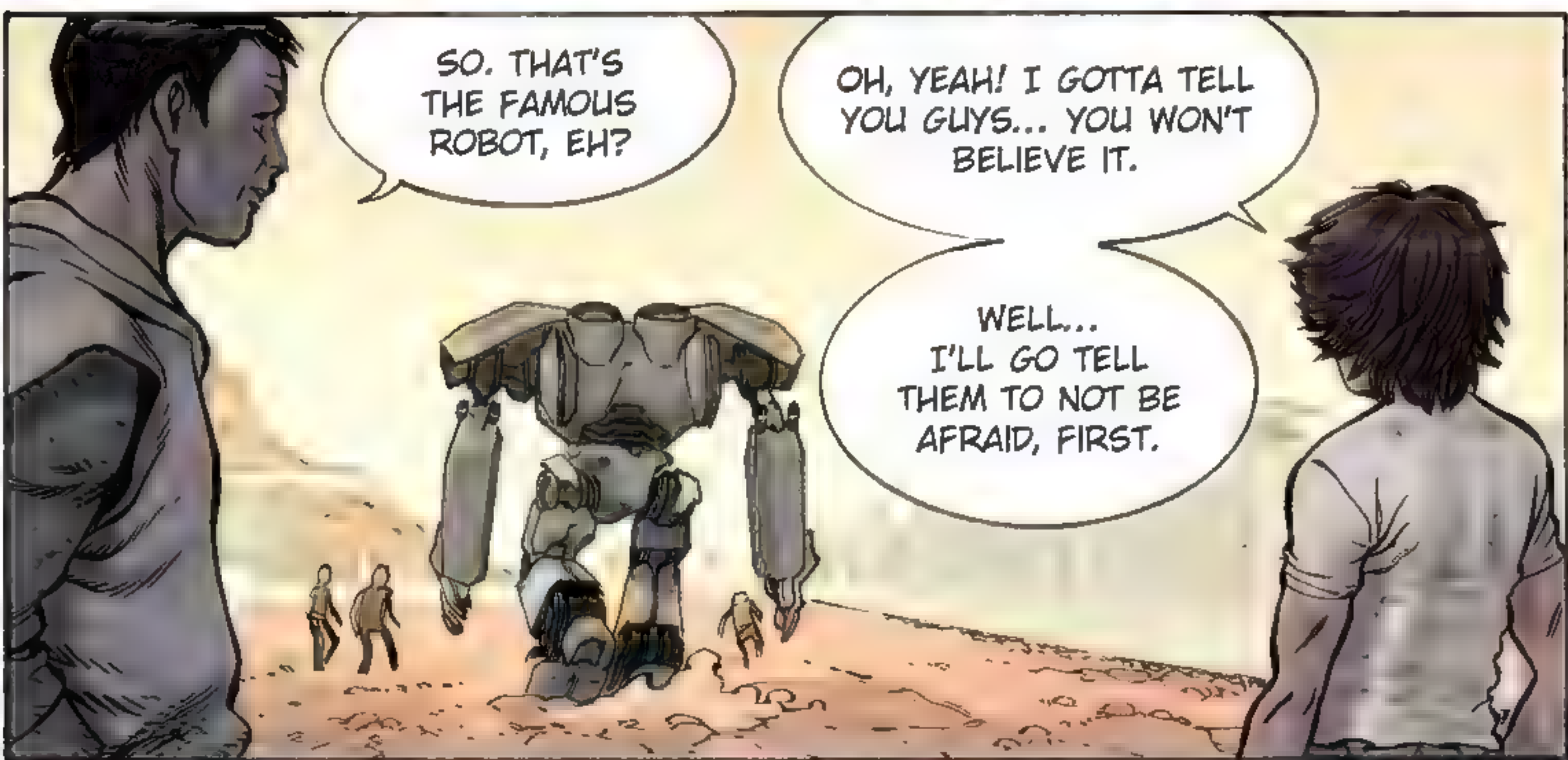
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!



YOU'RE ALL HERE? THAT'S GREAT!

OH, YEAH. I'M SURE SHERIFF'S THRILLED, FROM WHERE HE IS NOW...

C'MON, BLACKJACK. THAT'S ENOUGH GRUMBLING OUT OF YOU.



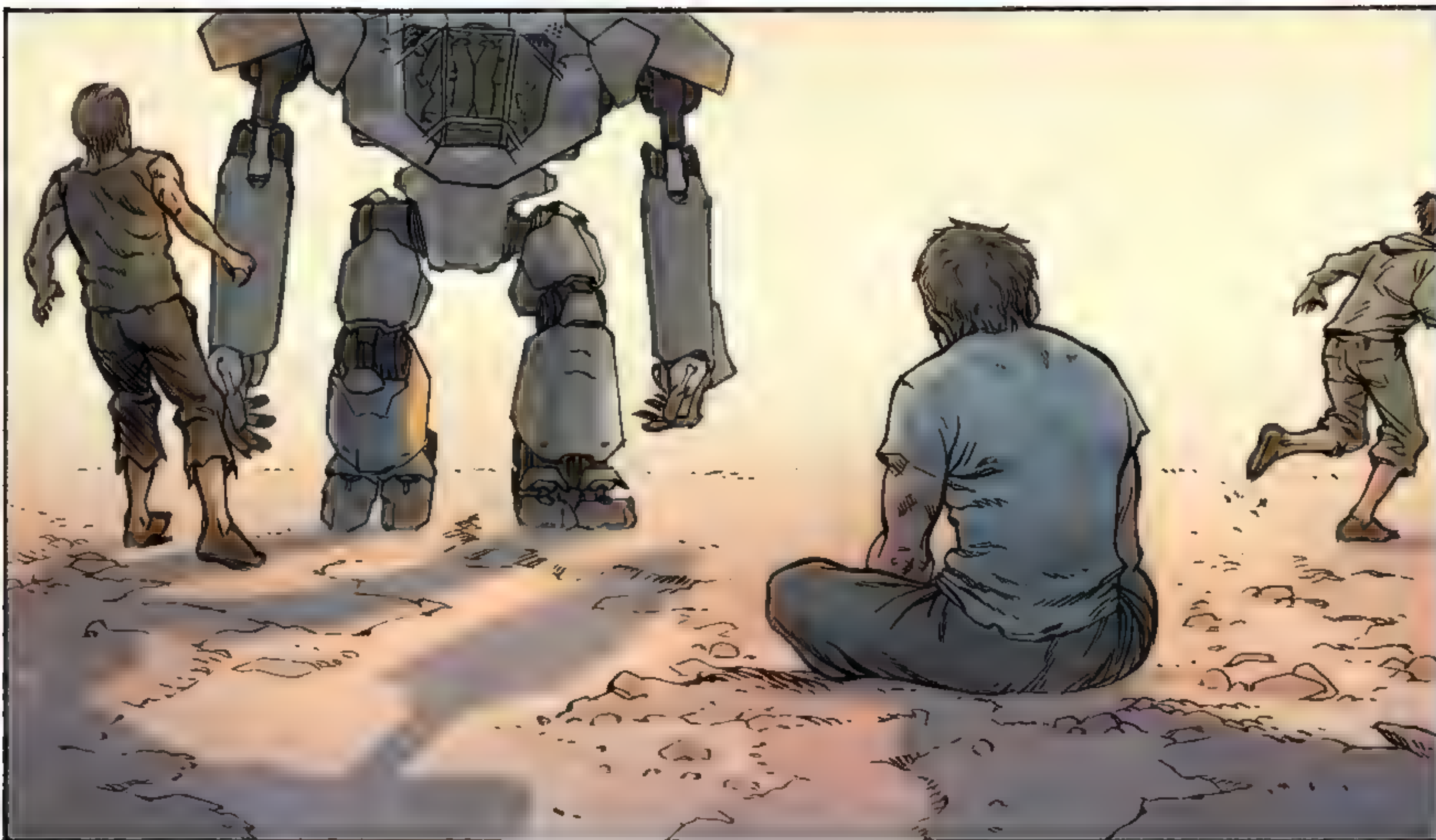
SO. THAT'S THE FAMOUS ROBOT, EH?

OH, YEAH! I GOTTA TELL YOU GUYS... YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT.

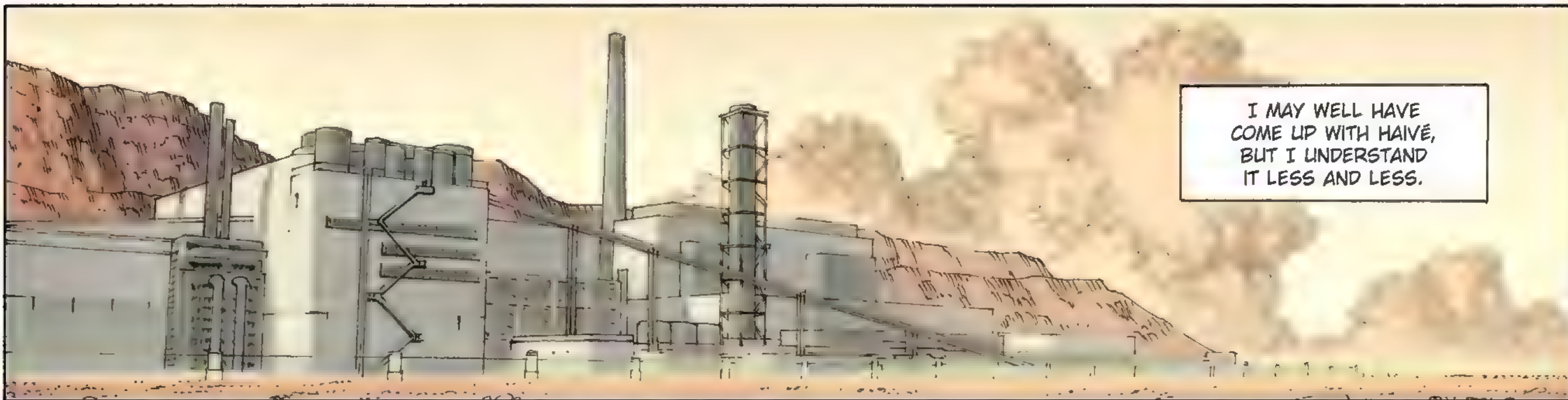
WELL... I'LL GO TELL THEM TO NOT BE AFRAID, FIRST.



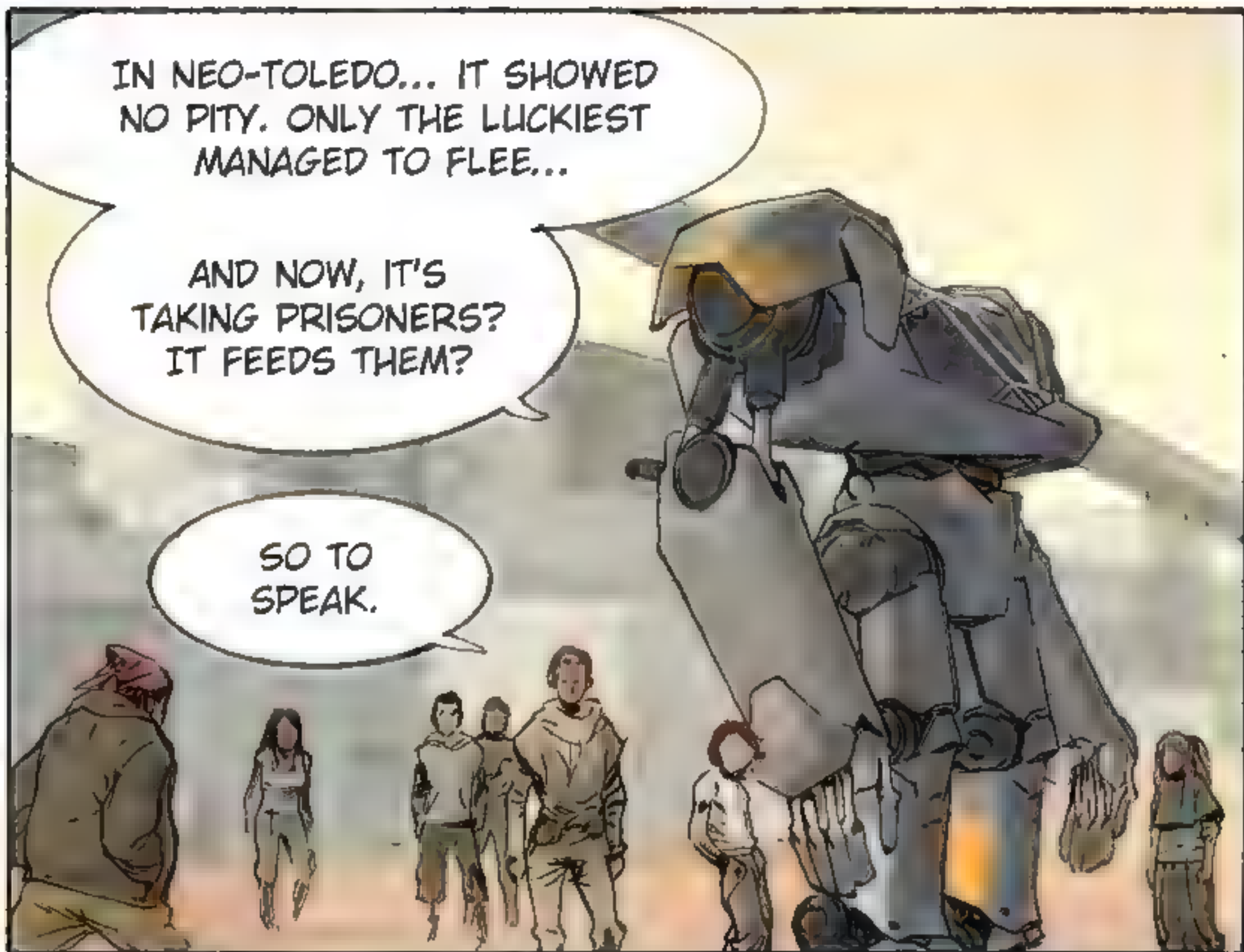
YOU KNOW, THE OTHERS ARE... BIZARRE. IT WOULD BE A SURPRISE IF THEY LISTENED TO YOU.



MAGNUS?



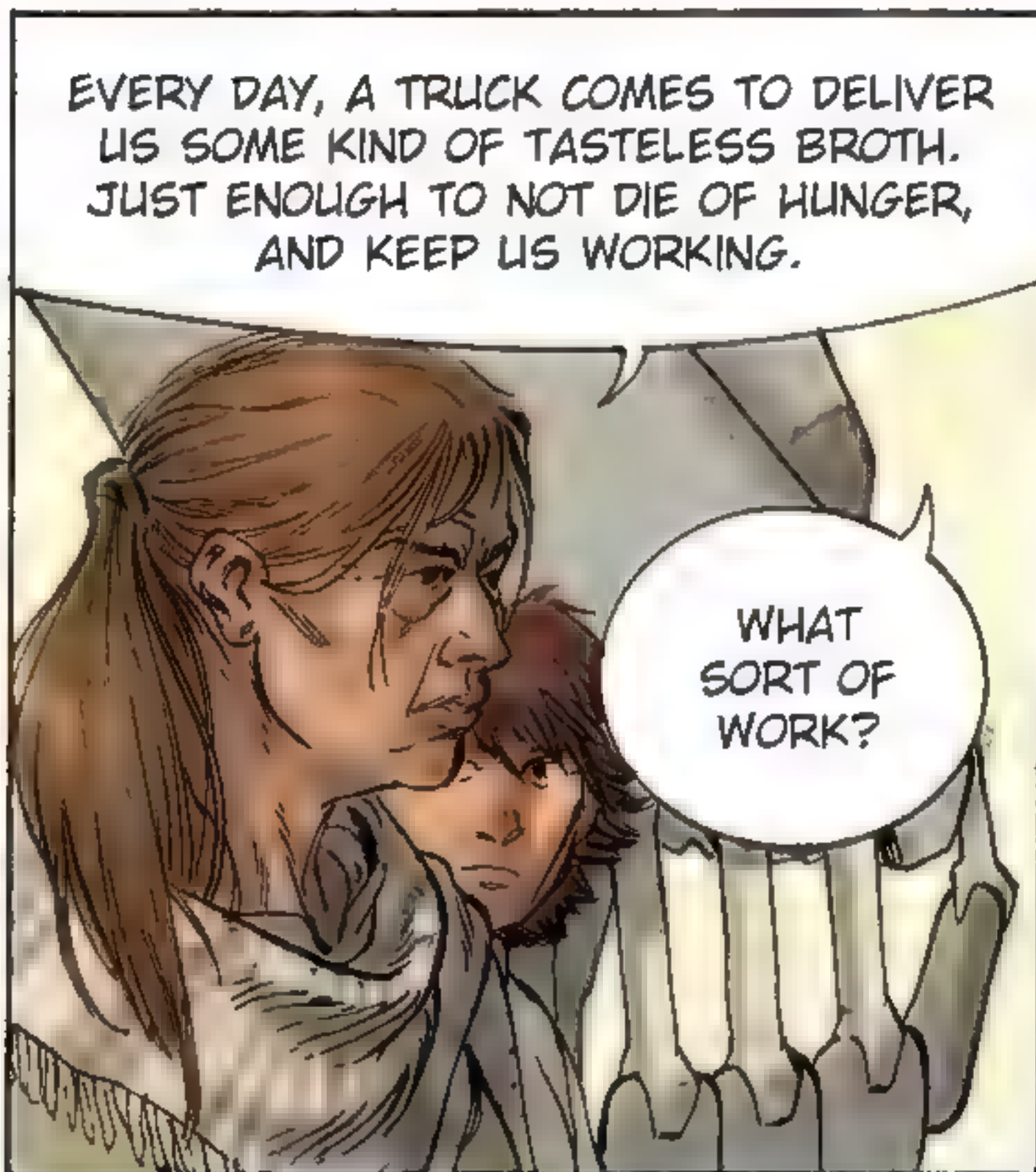
I MAY WELL HAVE
COME UP WITH HAIVÉ,
BUT I UNDERSTAND
IT LESS AND LESS.



IN NEO-TOLEDO... IT SHOWED
NO PITY. ONLY THE LUCKIEST
MANAGED TO FLEE...

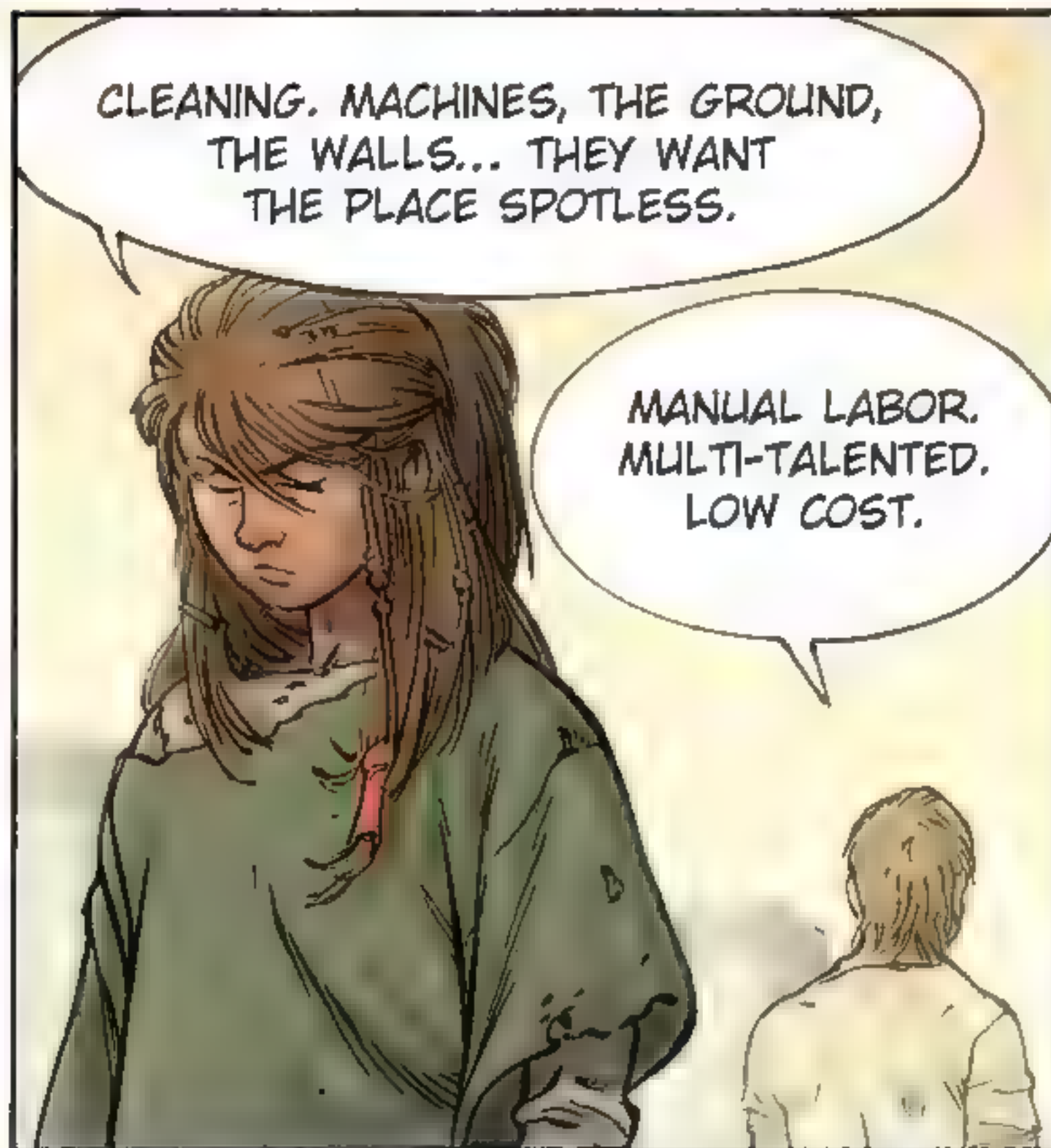
AND NOW, IT'S
TAKING PRISONERS?
IT FEEDS THEM?

SO TO
SPEAK.



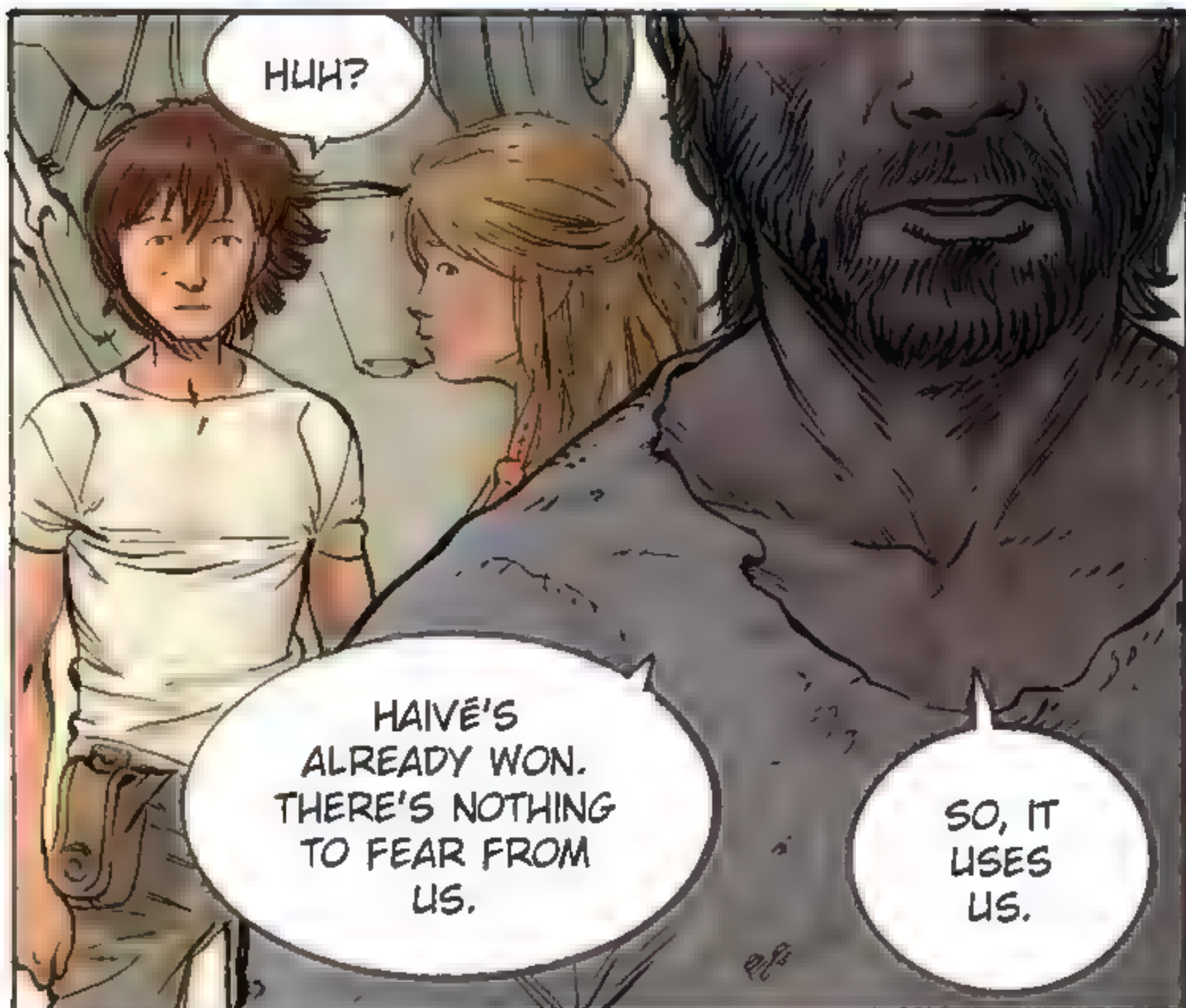
EVERY DAY, A TRUCK COMES TO DELIVER
US SOME KIND OF TASTELESS BROTH.
JUST ENOUGH TO NOT DIE OF HUNGER,
AND KEEP US WORKING.

WHAT
SORT OF
WORK?



CLEANING. MACHINES, THE GROUND,
THE WALLS... THEY WANT
THE PLACE SPOTLESS.

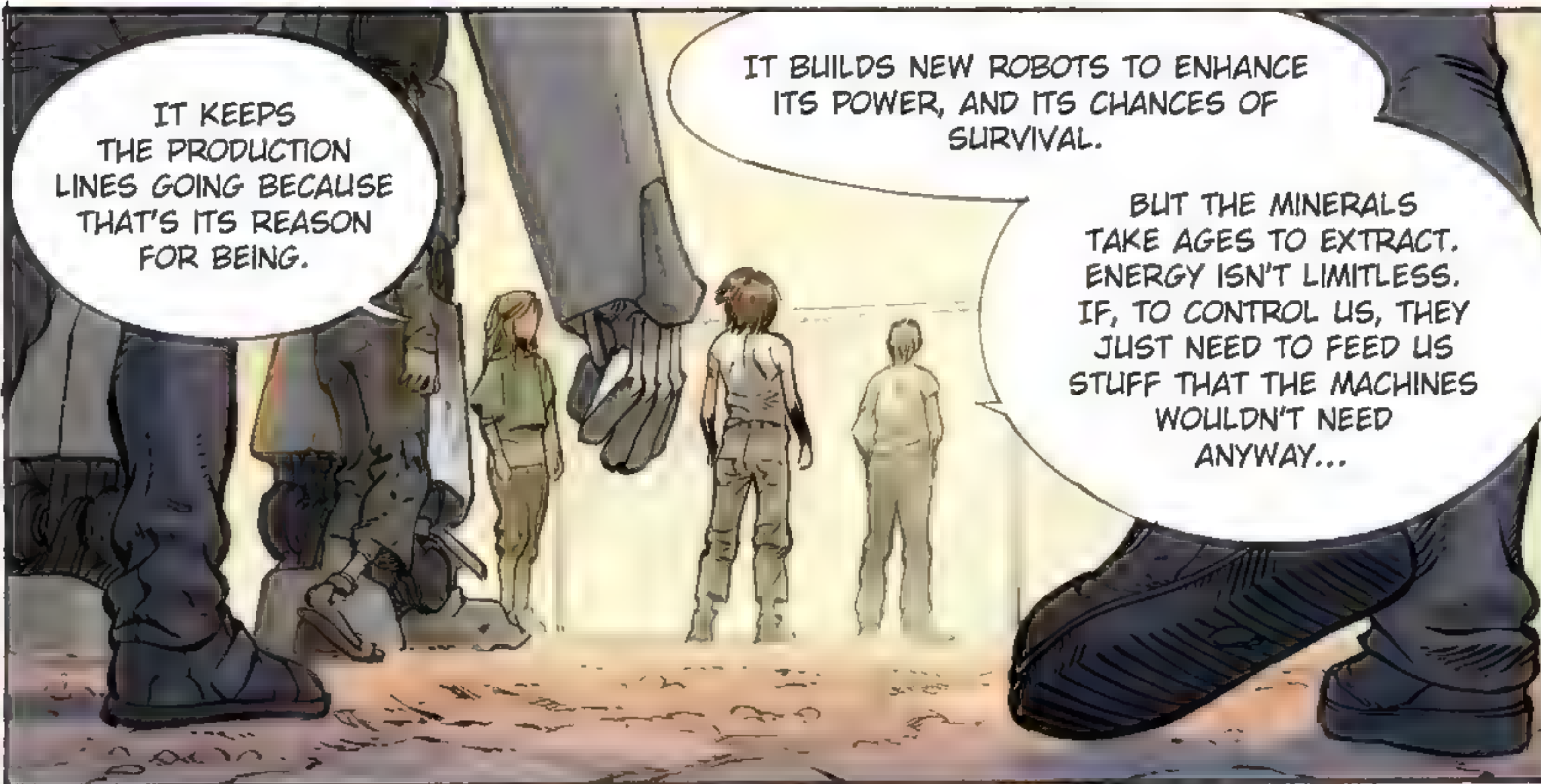
MANUAL LABOR.
MULTI-TALENTED.
LOW COST.



HUH?

HAIVÉ'S
ALREADY WON.
THERE'S NOTHING
TO FEAR FROM
US.

SO, IT
USES
US.



IT KEEPS
THE PRODUCTION
LINES GOING BECAUSE
THAT'S ITS REASON
FOR BEING.

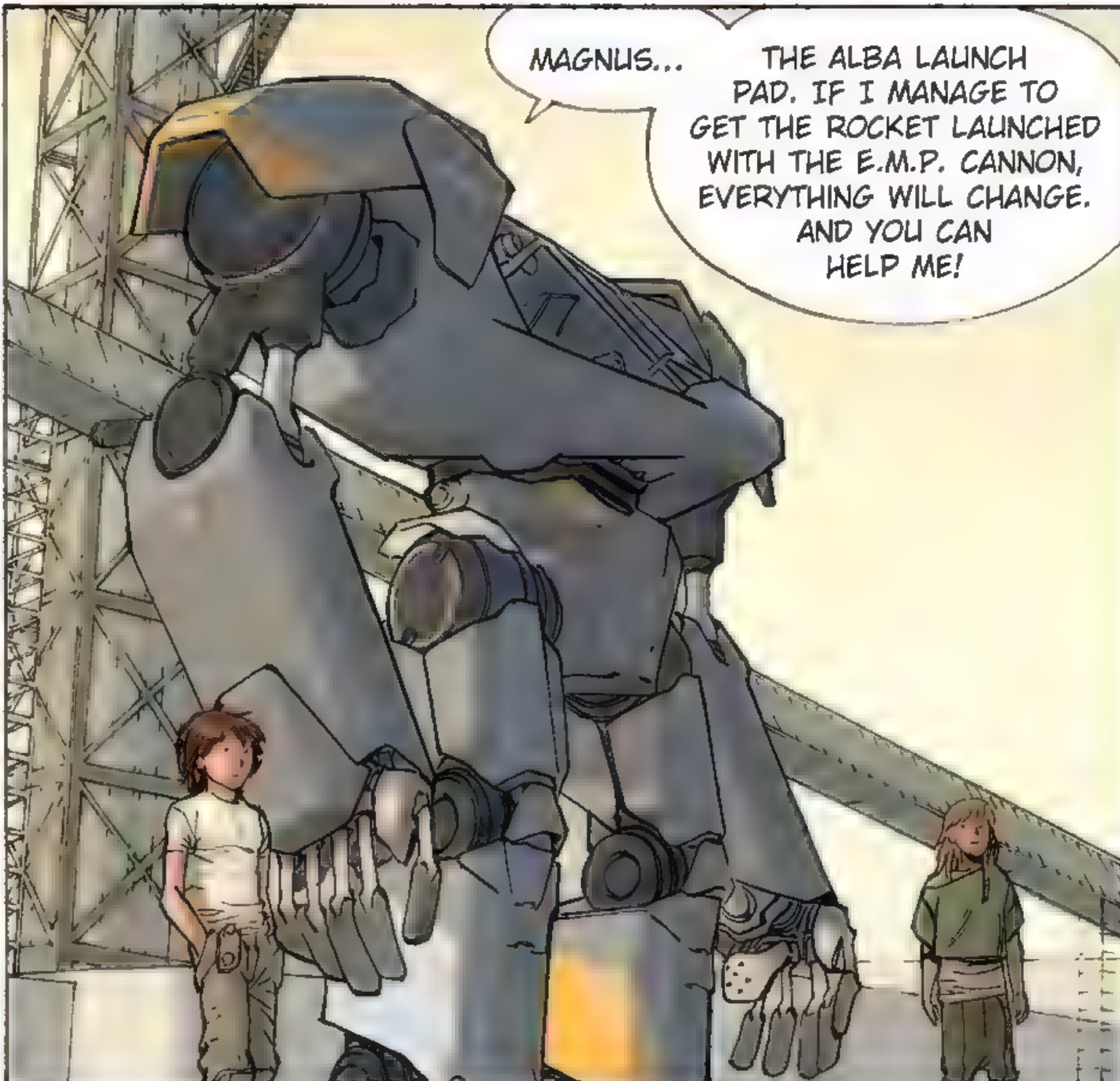
IT BUILDS NEW ROBOTS TO ENHANCE
ITS POWER, AND ITS CHANCES OF
SURVIVAL.

BUT THE MINERALS
TAKE AGES TO EXTRACT.
ENERGY ISN'T LIMITLESS.
IF, TO CONTROL US, THEY
JUST NEED TO FEED US
STUFF THAT THE MACHINES
WOULDN'T NEED
ANYWAY...



I'D DO THE SAME THING
IN ITS PLACE, TOO.

AH! ... RIGHT,
THANKS! THANK YOU, HAIVÉ,
THE MAGNANIMOUS BEING THAT
DEIGNS TO KEEP US IN THE STONE
AGE IN EXCHANGE FOR A FEW
MEALS HERE AND THERE!



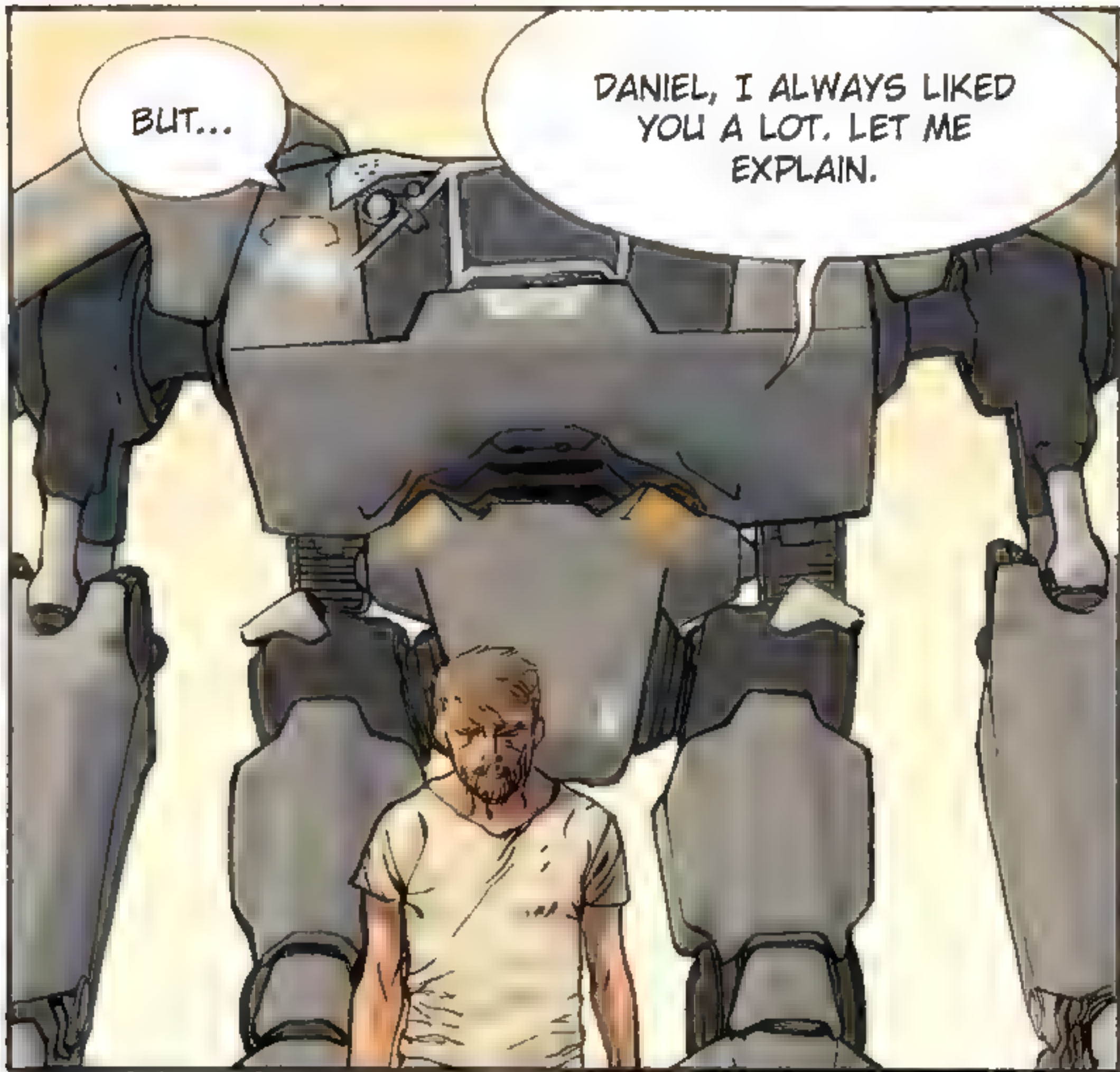
MAGNUS...

THE ALBA LAUNCH
PAD. IF I MANAGE TO
GET THE ROCKET LAUNCHED
WITH THE E.M.P. CANNON,
EVERYTHING WILL CHANGE.
AND YOU CAN
HELP ME!



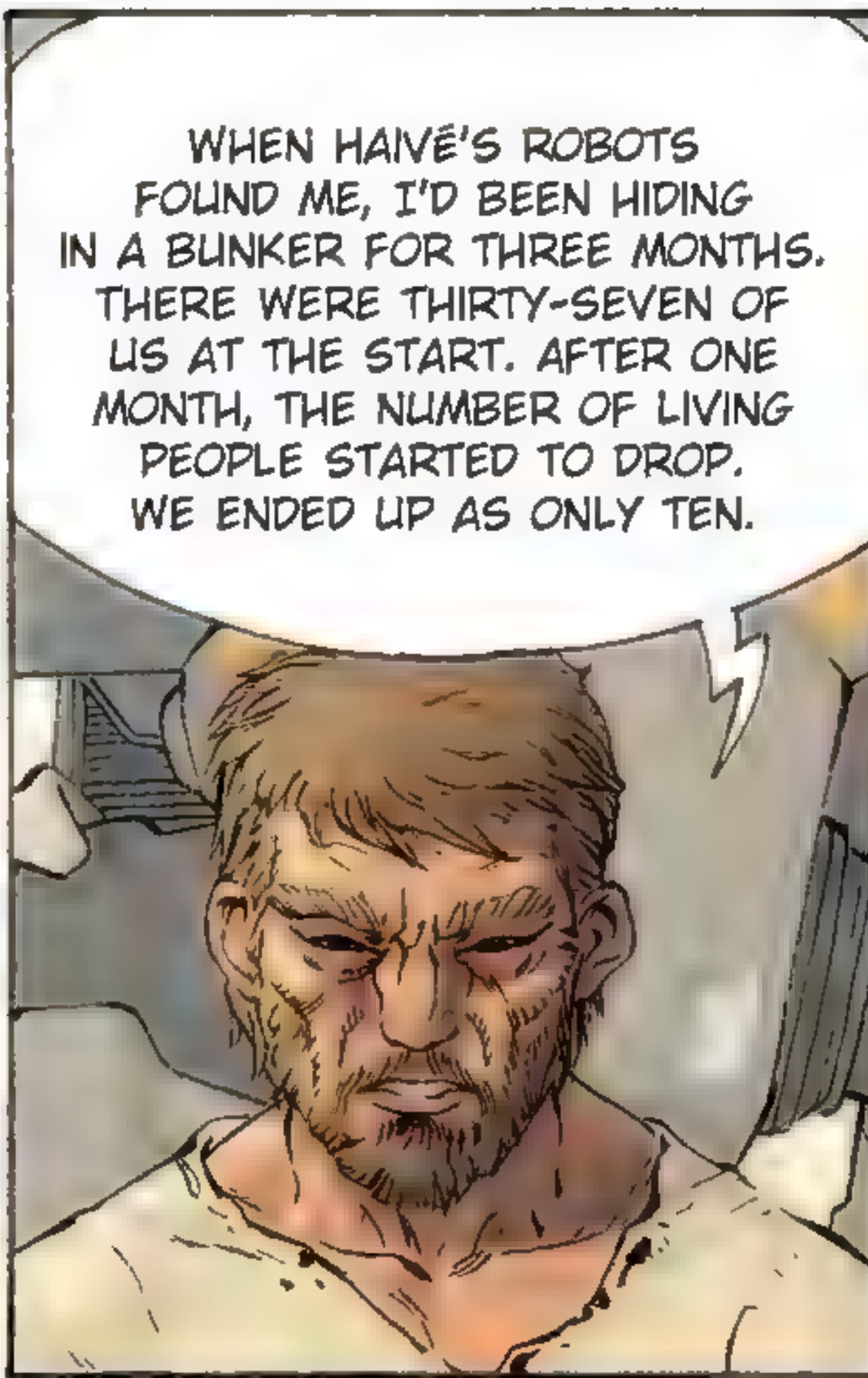
...

HELP
YOU MAKE
THINGS WORSE,
YOU MEAN?



BUT...

DANIEL, I ALWAYS LIKED YOU A LOT. LET ME EXPLAIN.

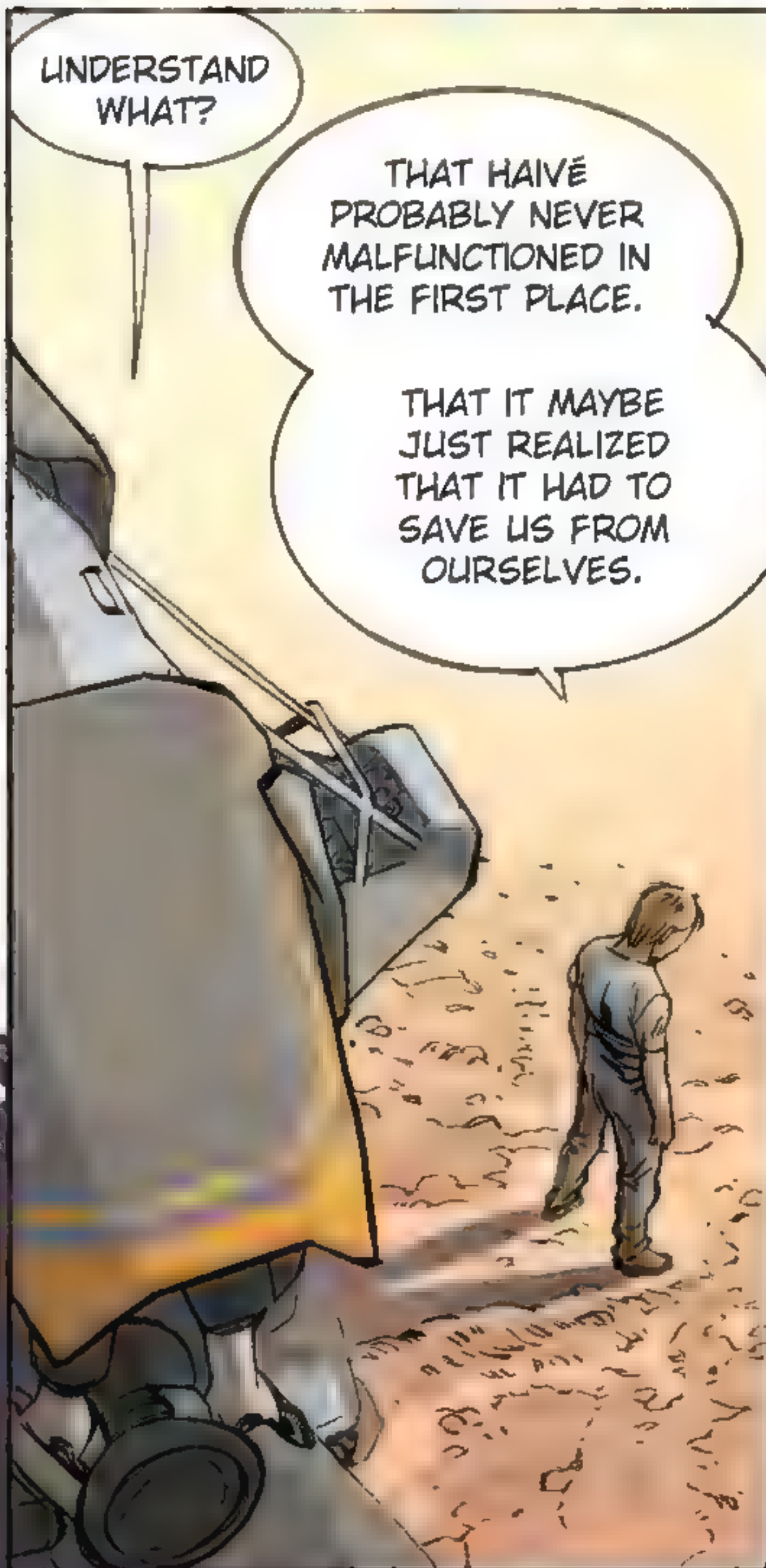


WHEN HAIVE'S ROBOTS FOUND ME, I'D BEEN HIDING IN A BUNKER FOR THREE MONTHS. THERE WERE THIRTY-SEVEN OF US AT THE START. AFTER ONE MONTH, THE NUMBER OF LIVING PEOPLE STARTED TO DROP. WE ENDED UP AS ONLY TEN.



NO ONE DARED TO GO OUT. ANYTHING TO AVOID CONTACT WITH THE MACHINES. THE TASTE OF HUMAN FLESH. VIOLENCE. MADNESS.

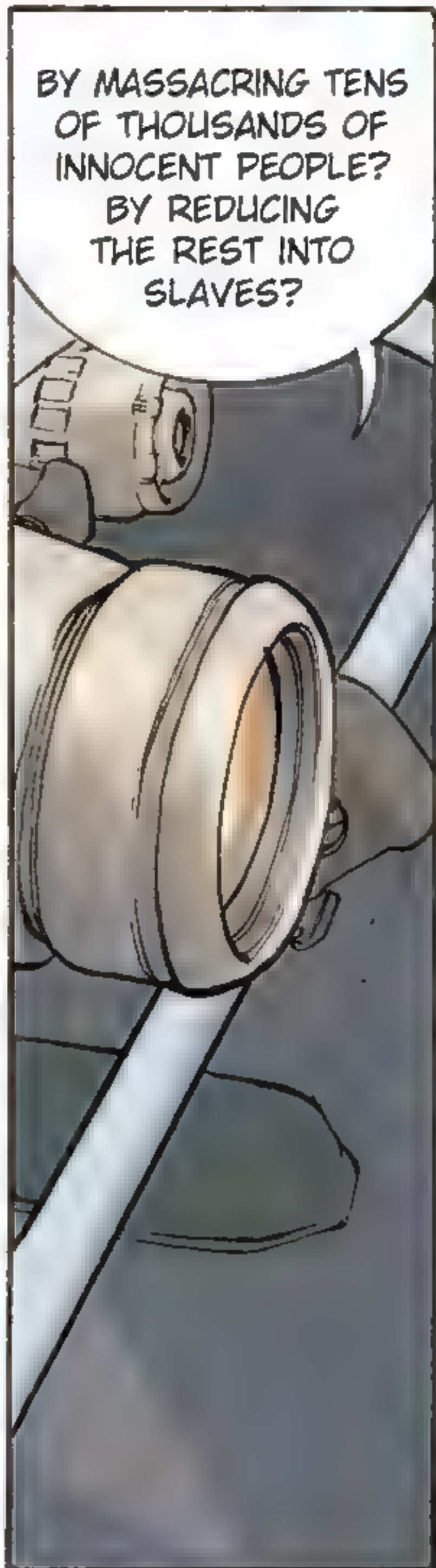
BUT NOW, I UNDERSTAND.



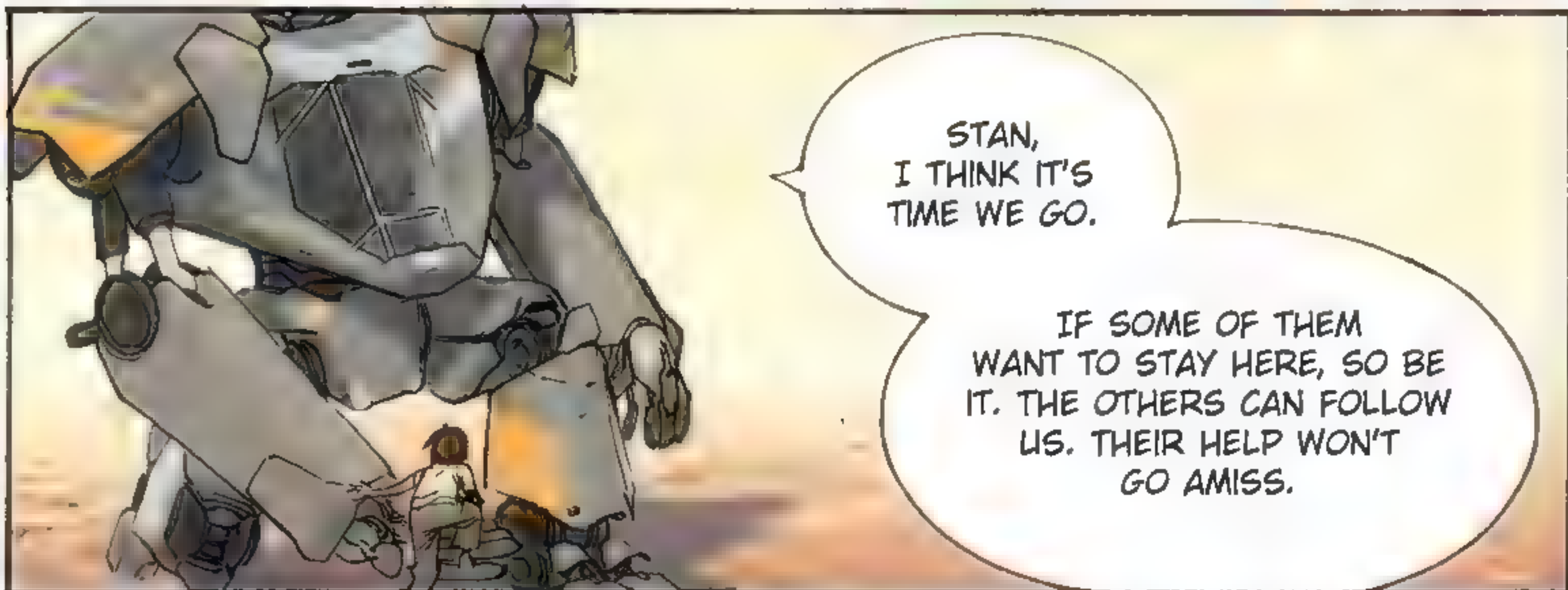
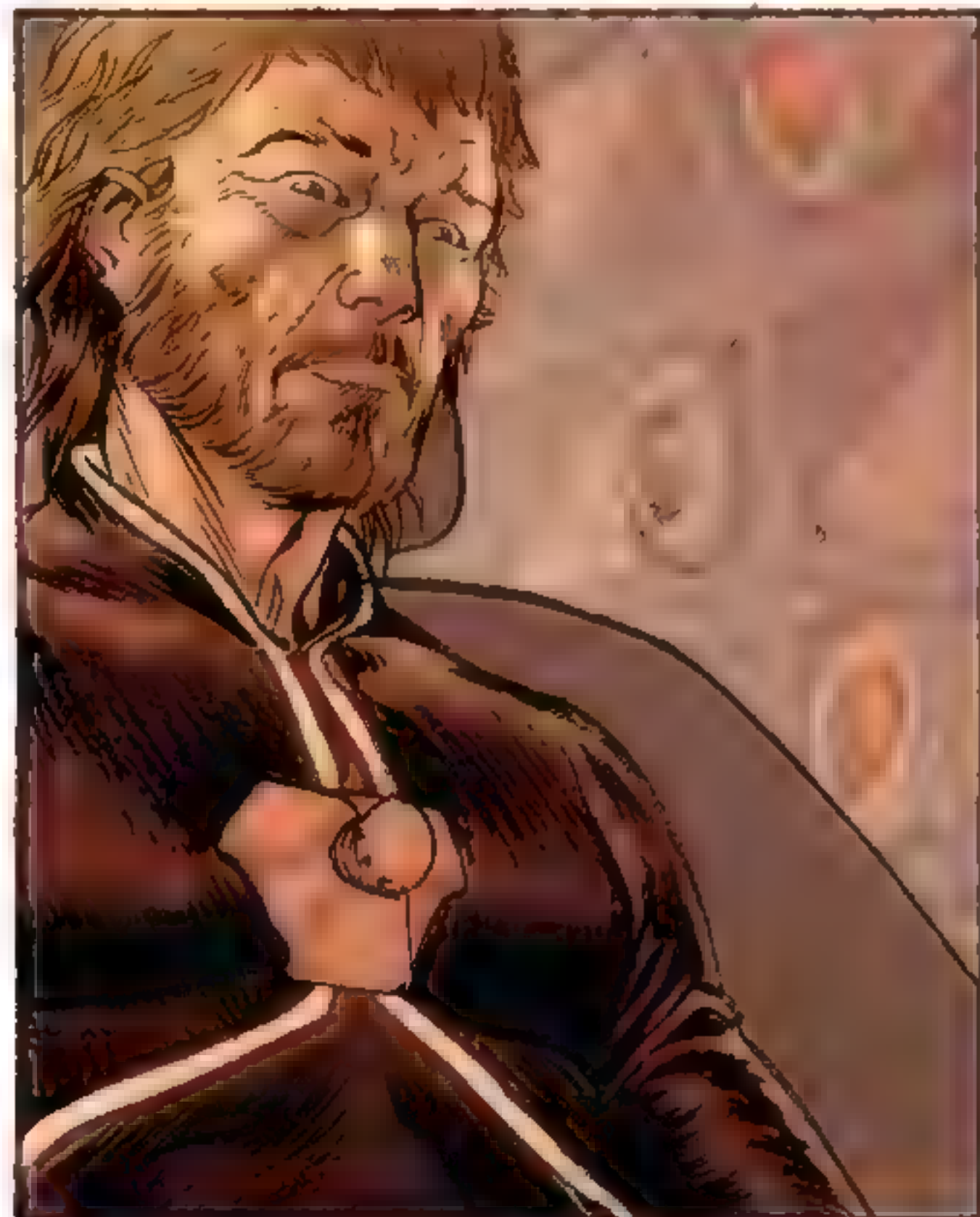
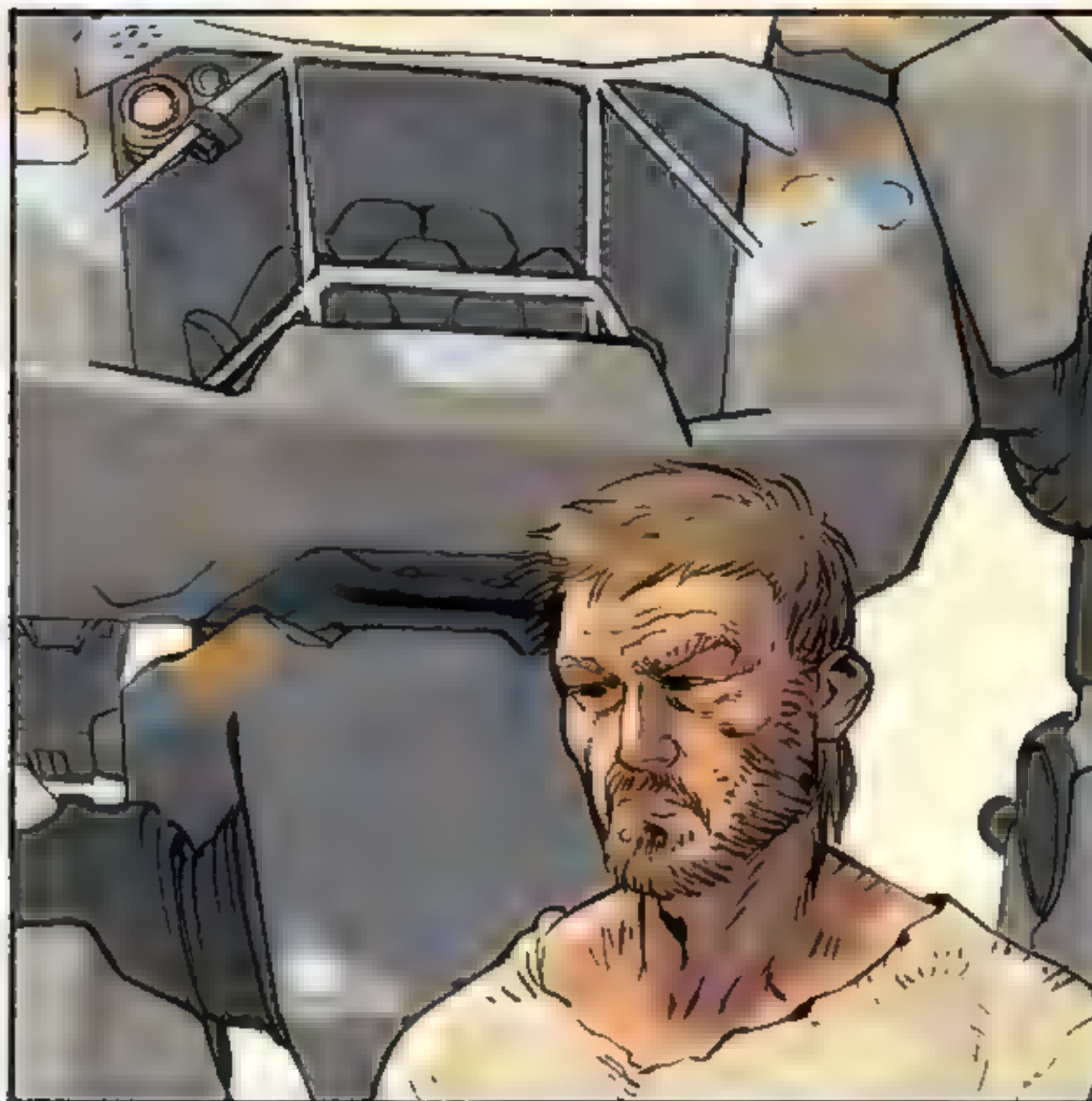
UNDERSTAND WHAT?

THAT HAIVE PROBABLY NEVER MALFUNCTIONED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THAT IT MAYBE JUST REALIZED THAT IT HAD TO SAVE US FROM OURSELVES.

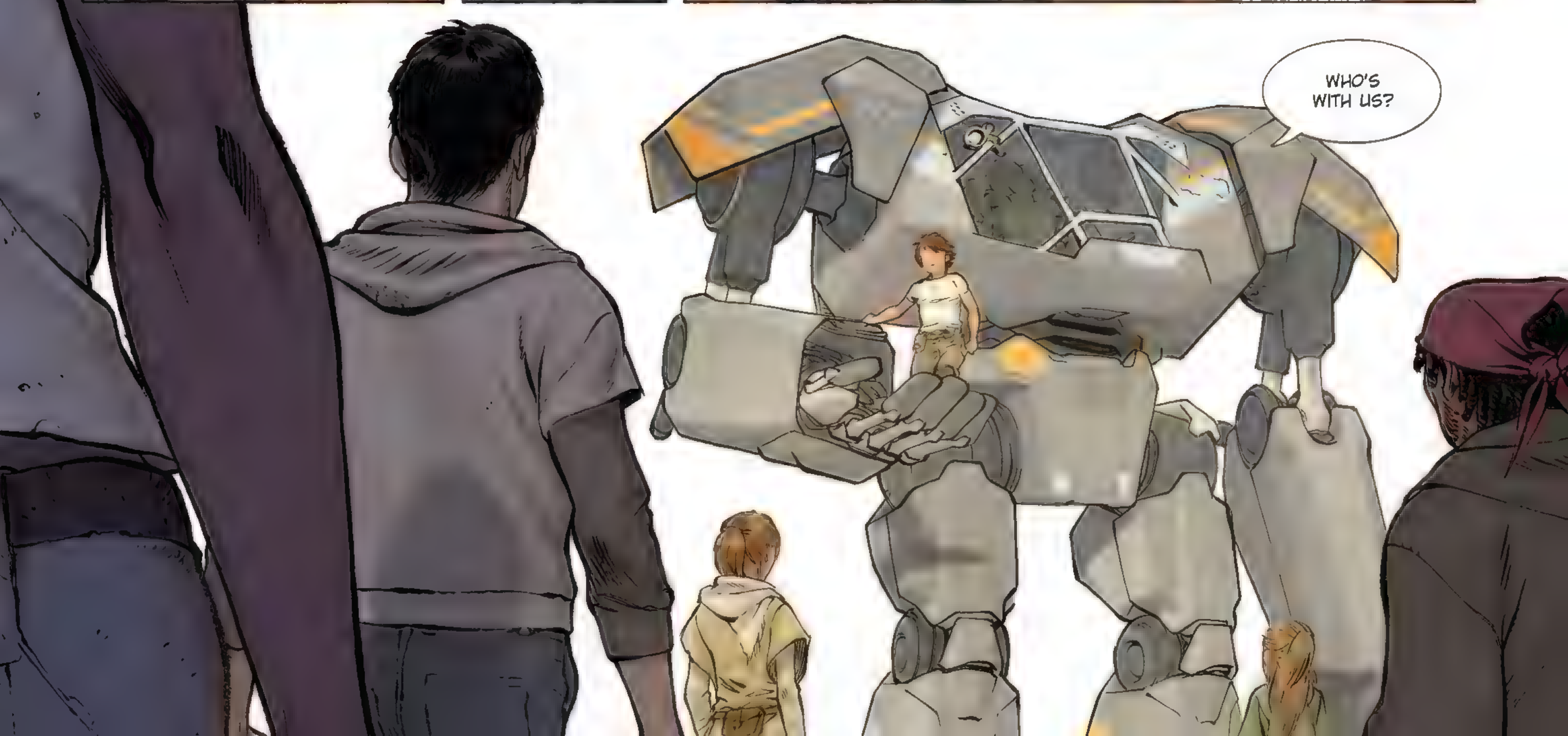


BY MASSACRING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE? BY REDUCING THE REST INTO SLAVES?

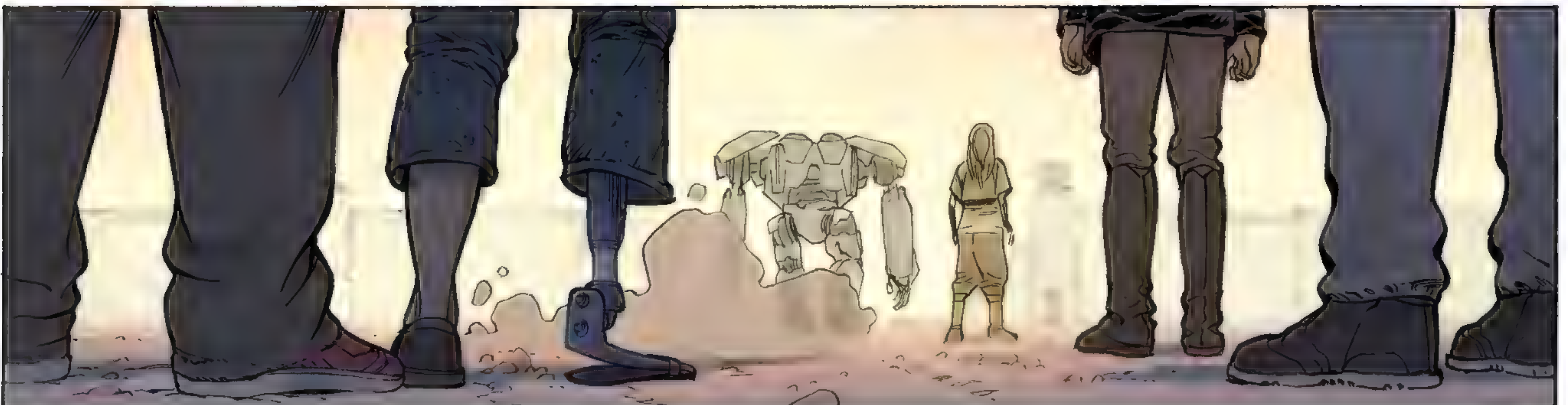
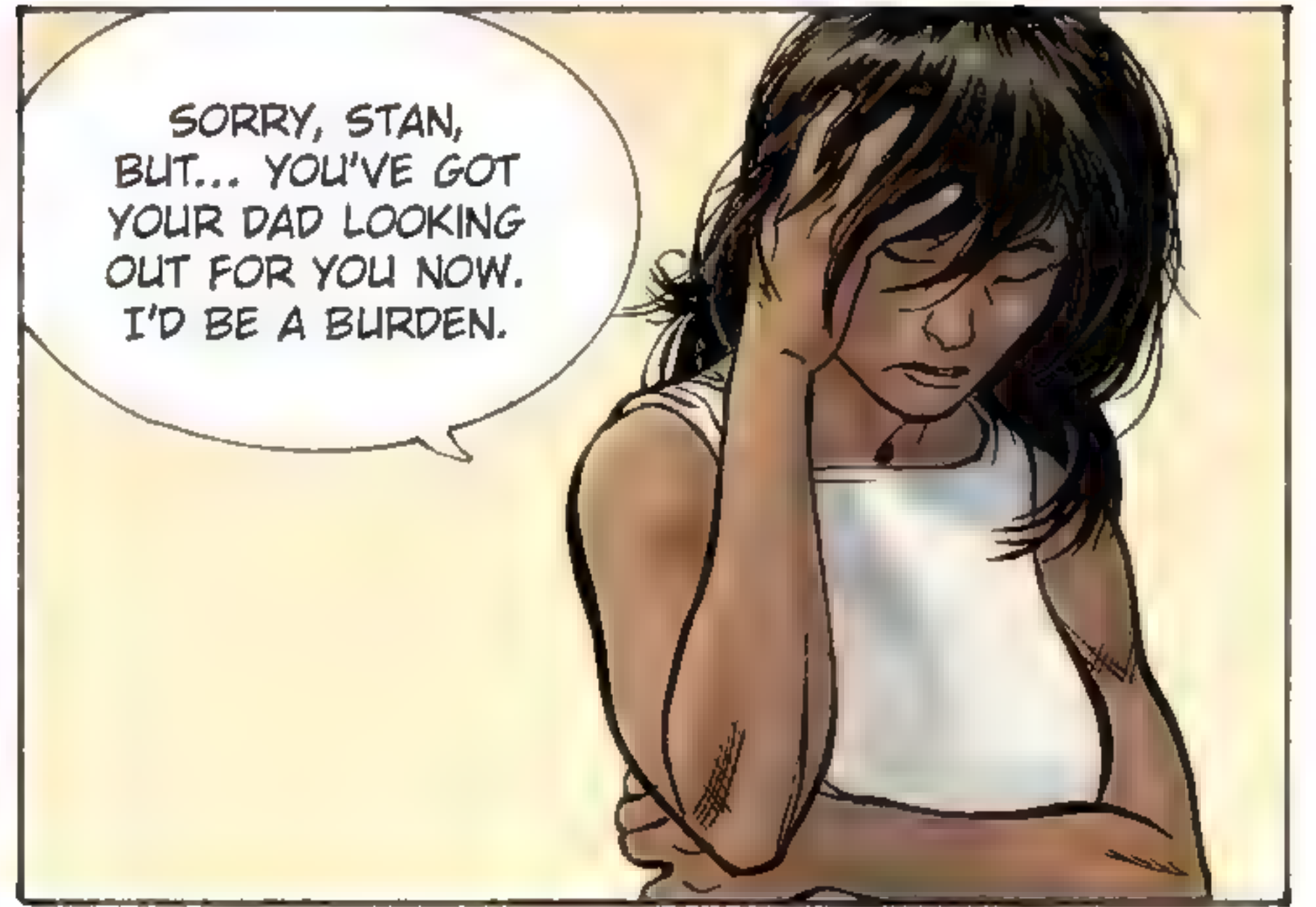


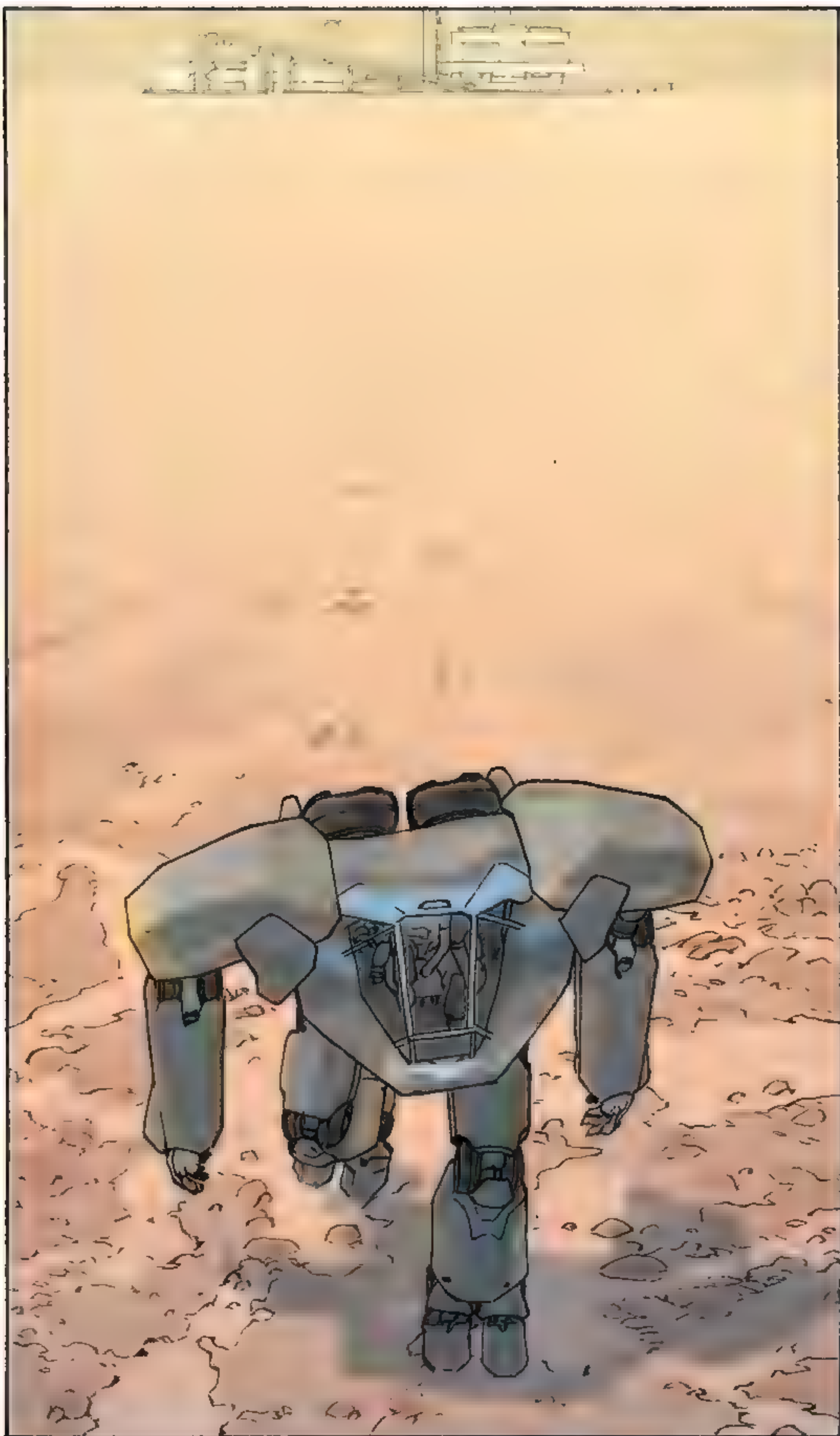
STAN, I THINK IT'S TIME WE GO.

IF SOME OF THEM WANT TO STAY HERE, SO BE IT. THE OTHERS CAN FOLLOW US. THEIR HELP WON'T GO AMISS.



WHO'S WITH US?





YOU THINK MAGNUS WAS RIGHT? THAT WE'RE GOING TO END UP MAKING THINGS WORSE?

LISTEN TO ME...



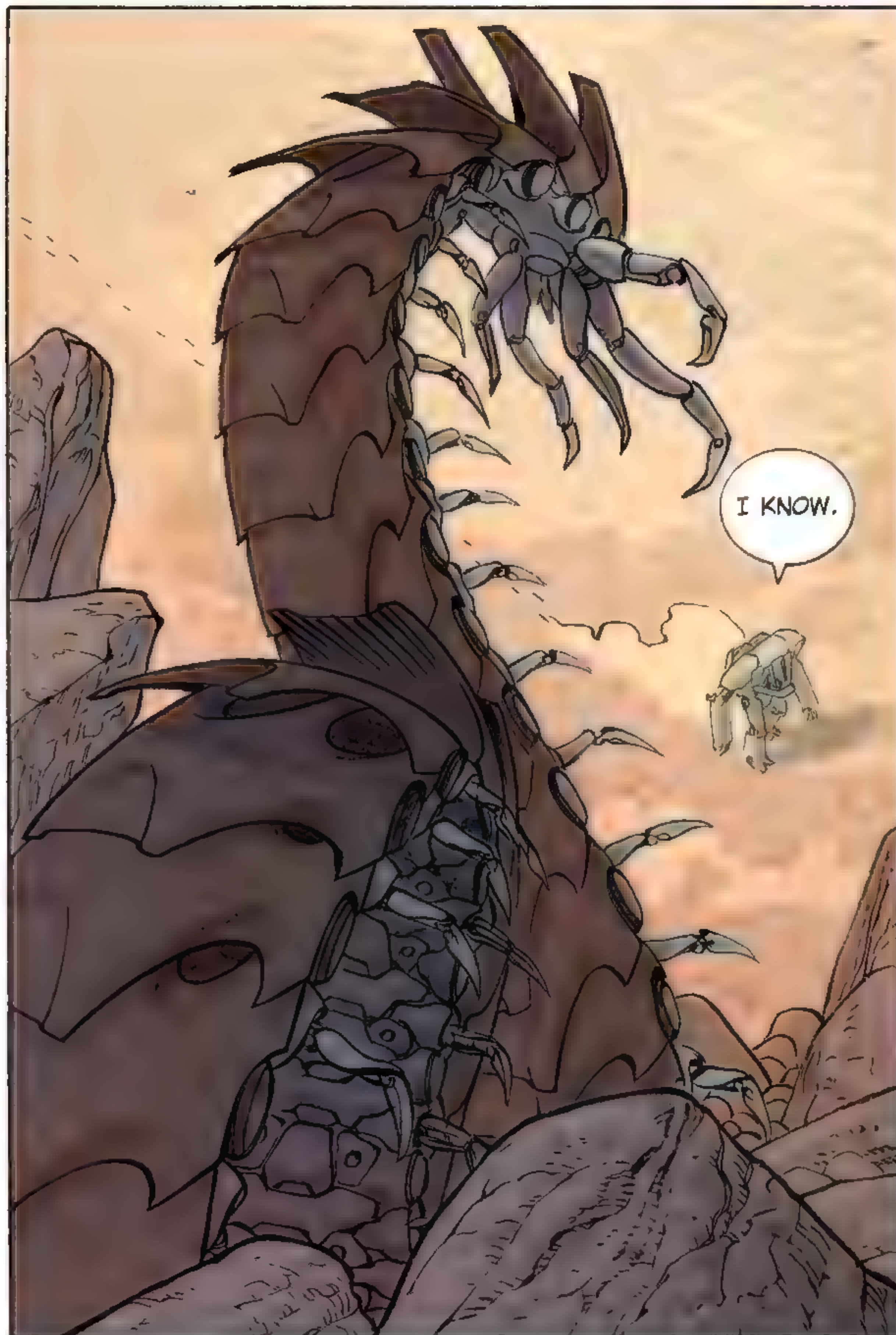
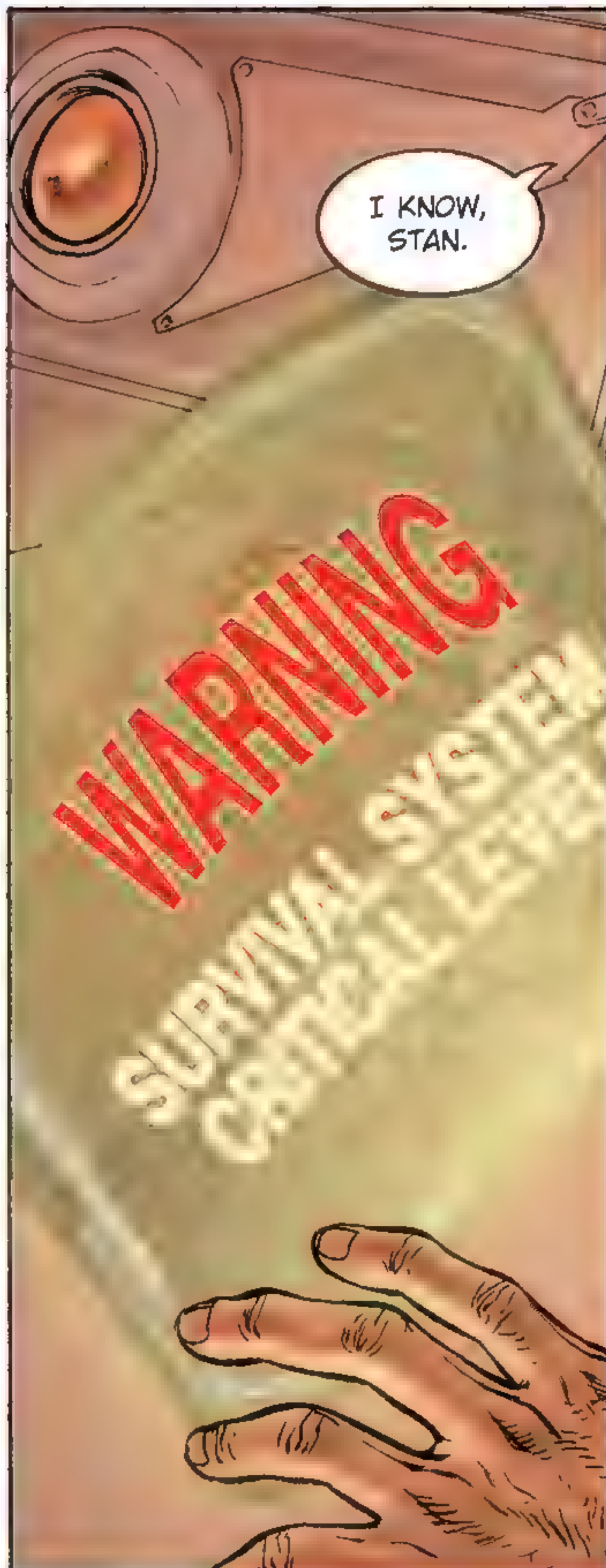
IF ANYONE MADE THINGS WORSE, IT WAS ME. MAGNUS. A.I.U.M.. THE ENTIRE COMPANY...

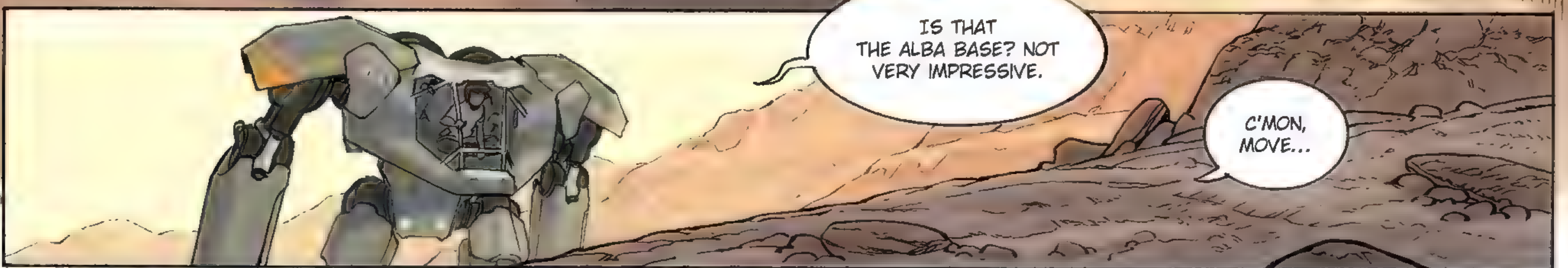
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO BEAT YOURSELF UP ABOUT.



MAYBE IN ATTACKING HAIVE, IT'LL TAKE REVENGE. BUT IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. AND IT'S YOUR LIFE THAT'S AT STAKE HERE. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO DEFEND YOURSELF.

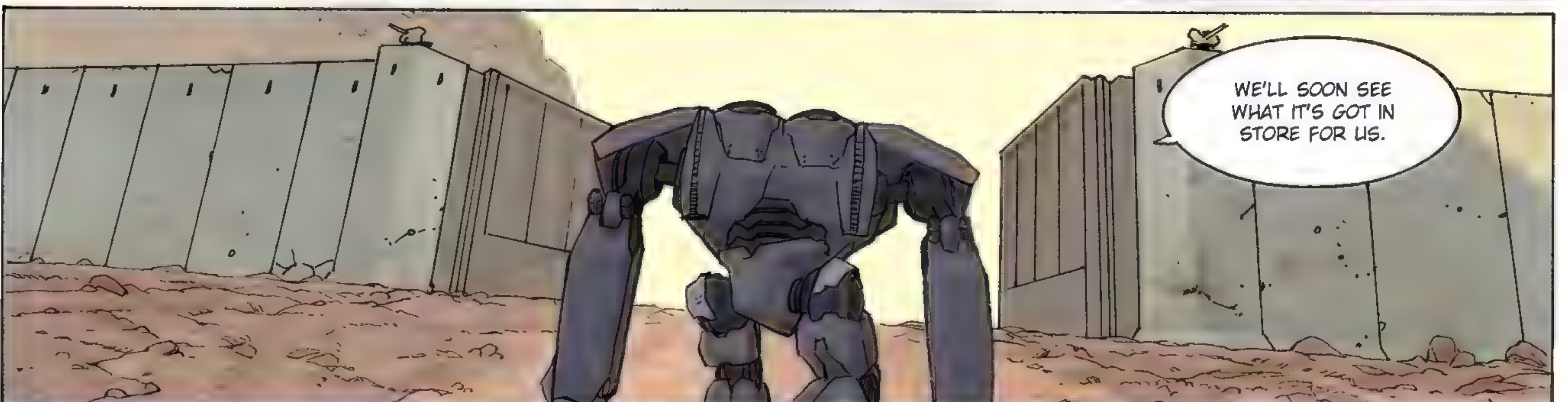
YOURS TOO. I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.



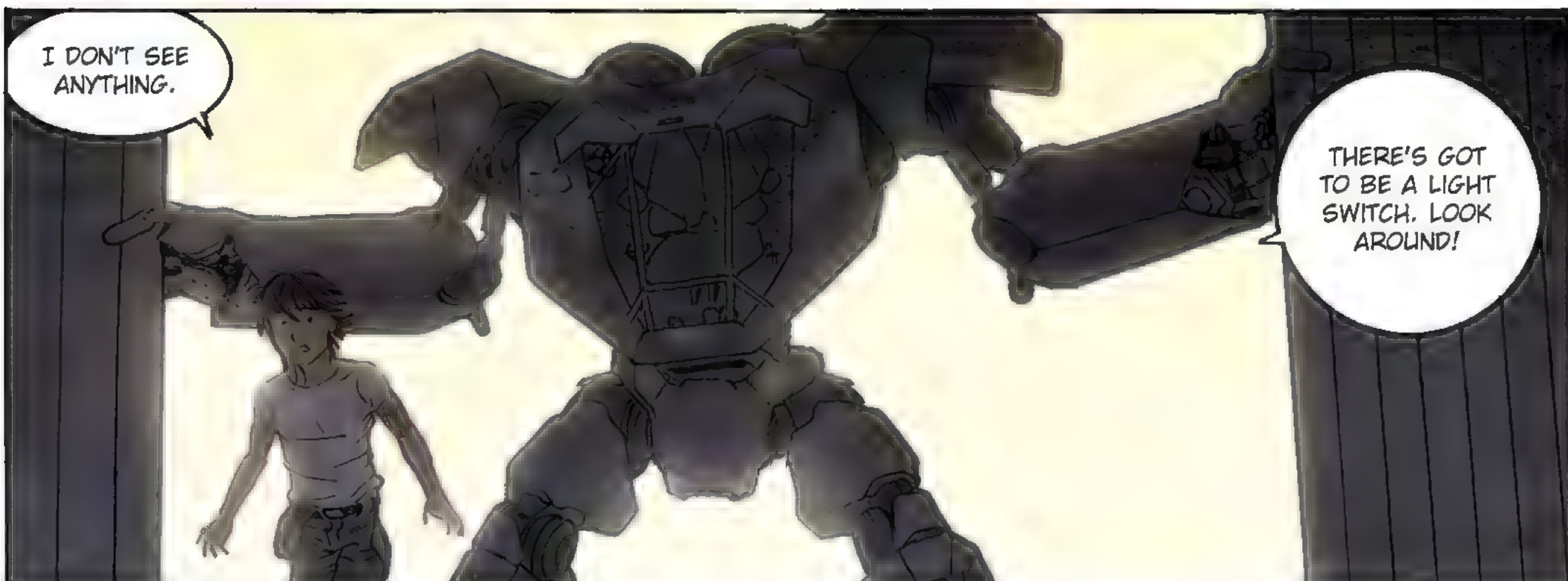
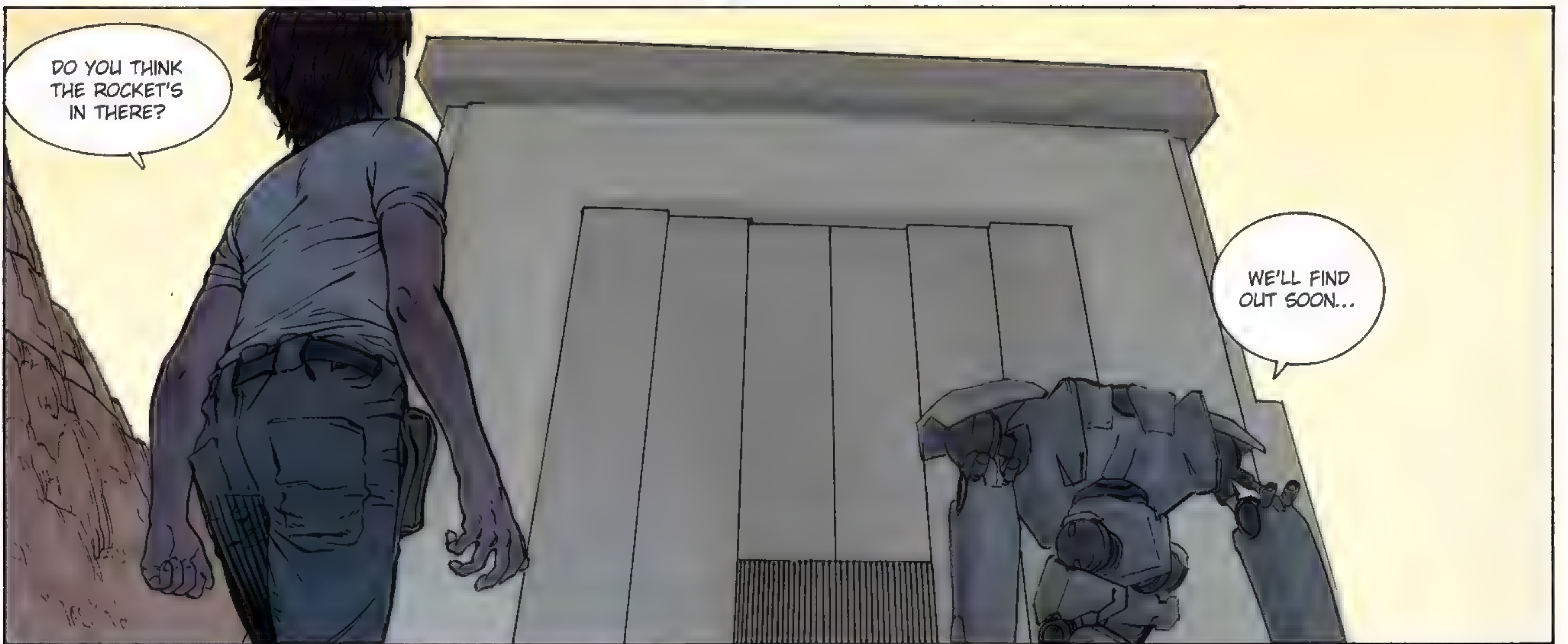
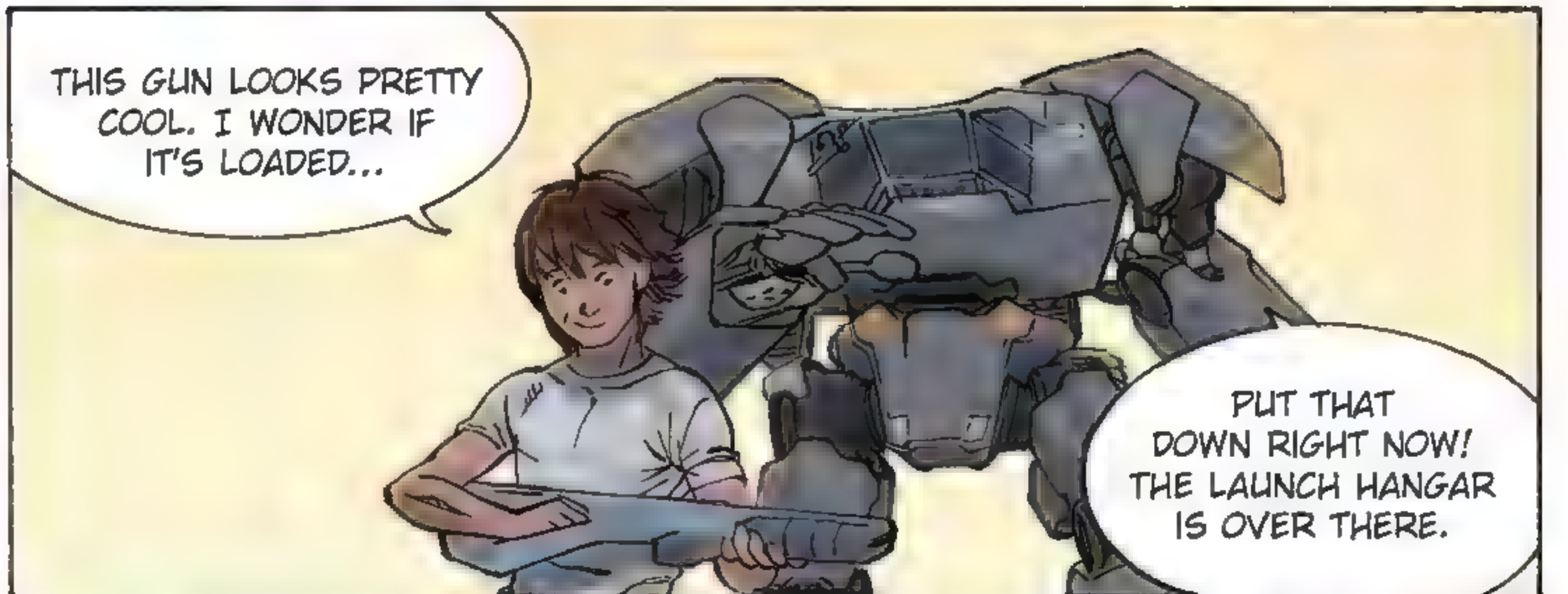
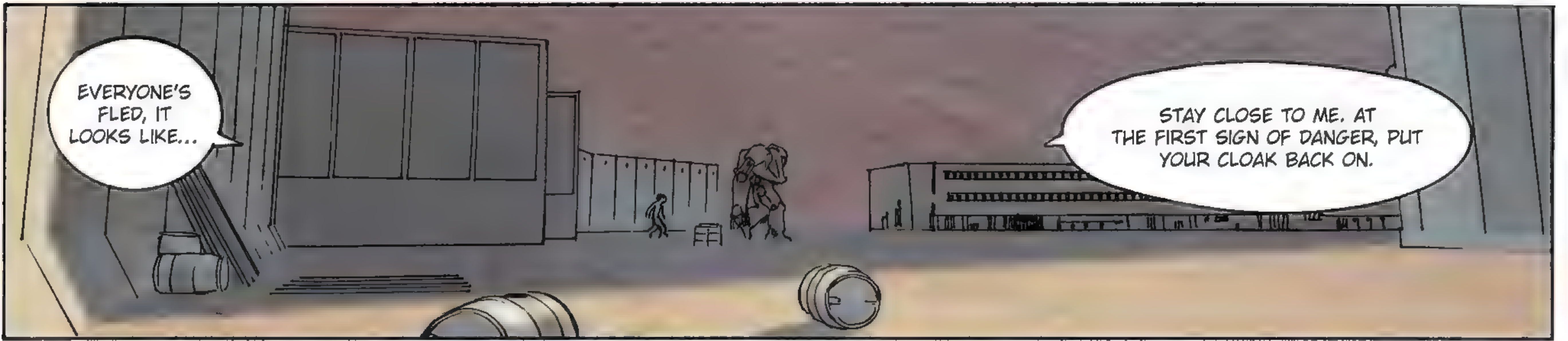


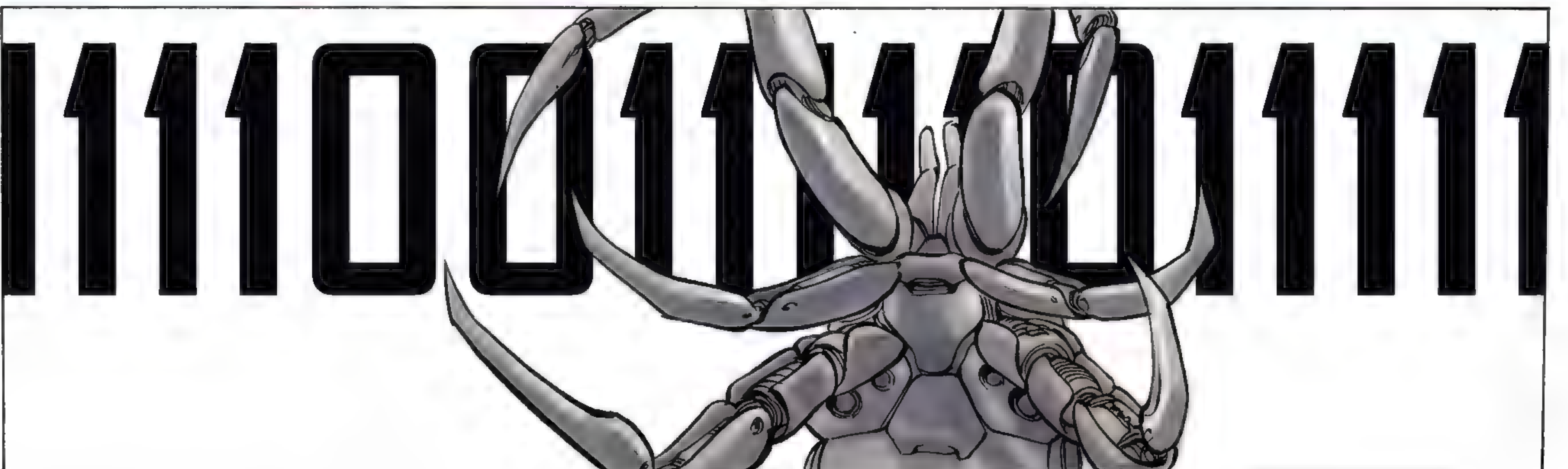
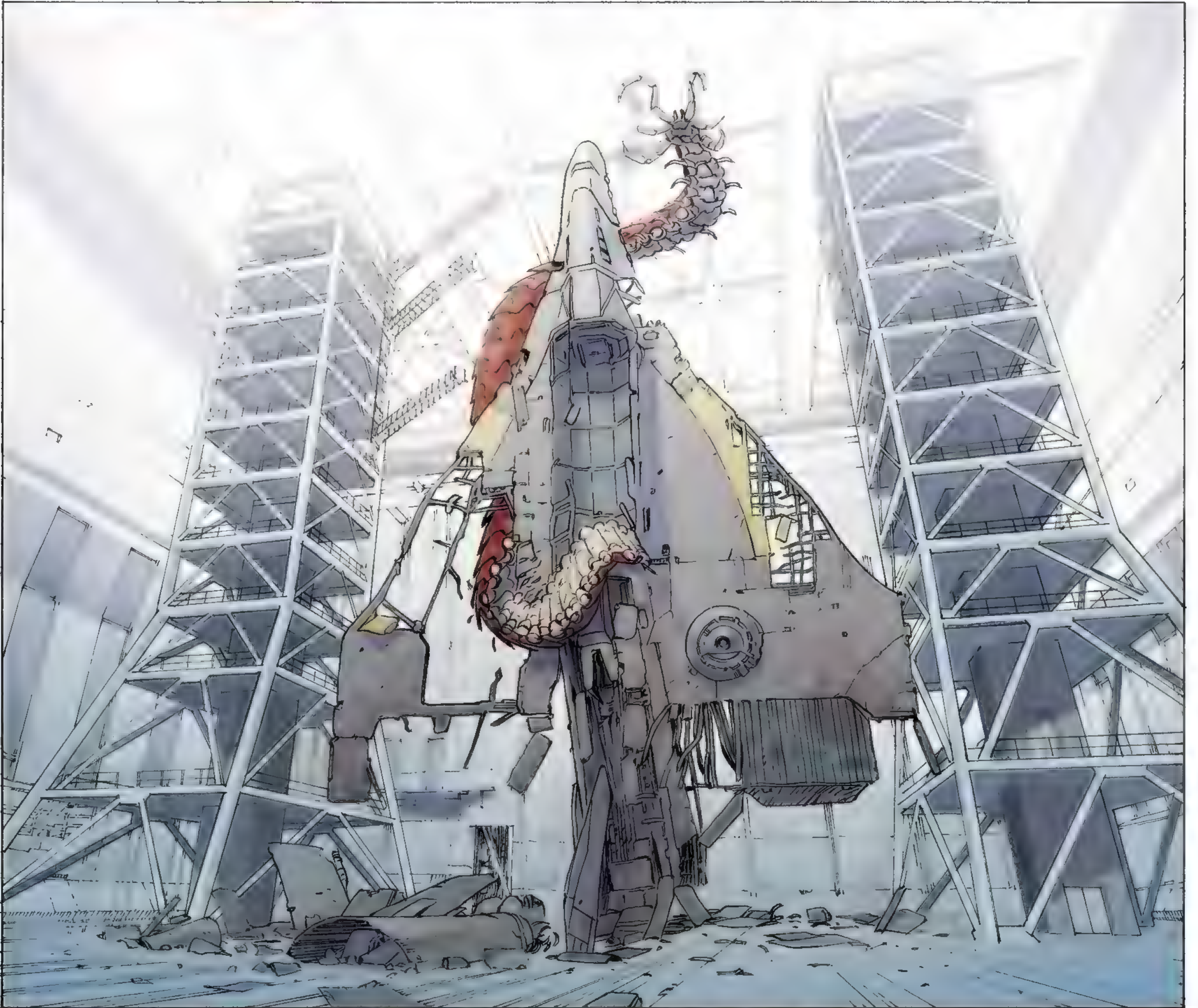
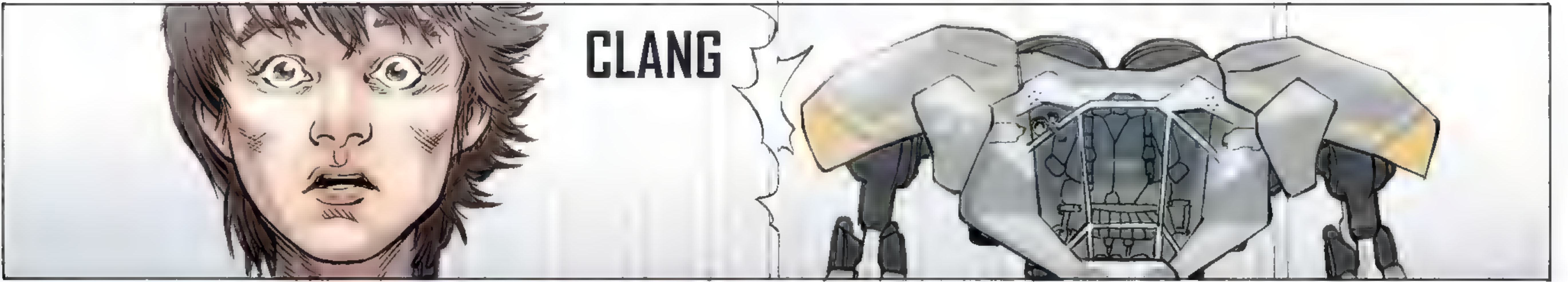
IS THAT
THE ALBA BASE? NOT
VERY IMPRESSIVE.

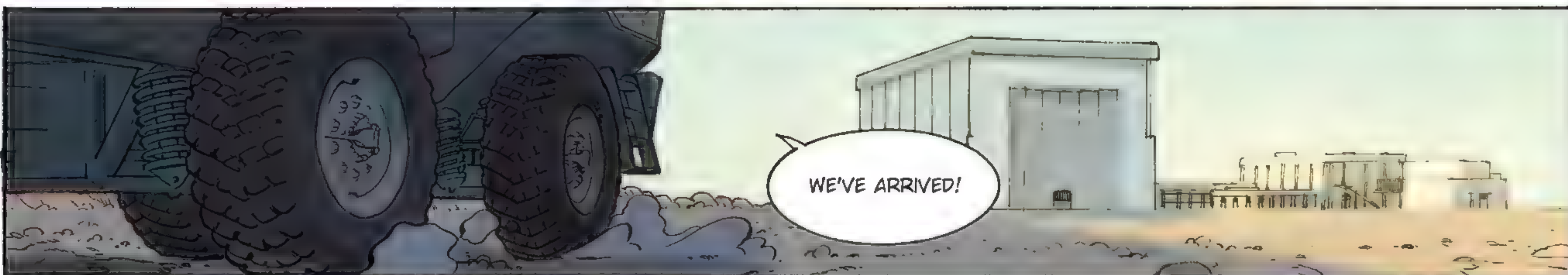
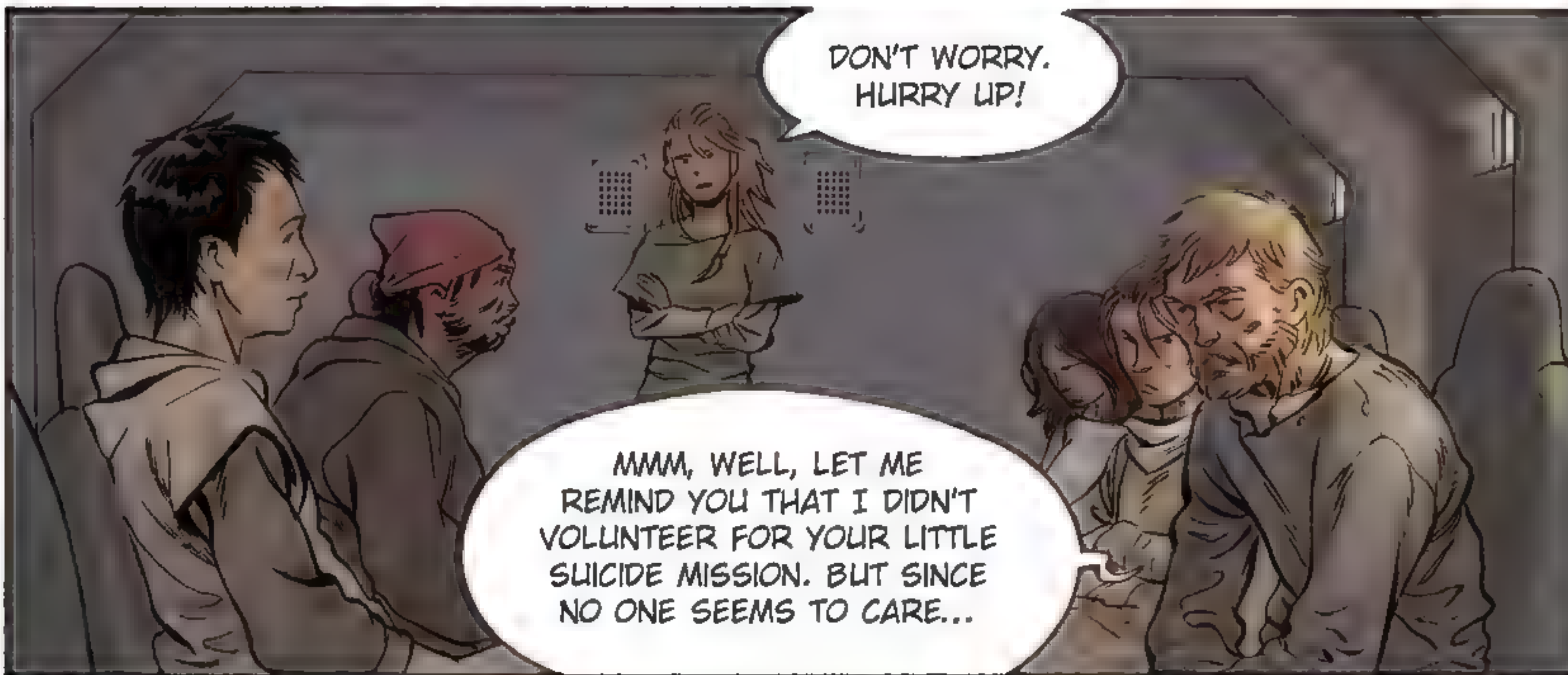
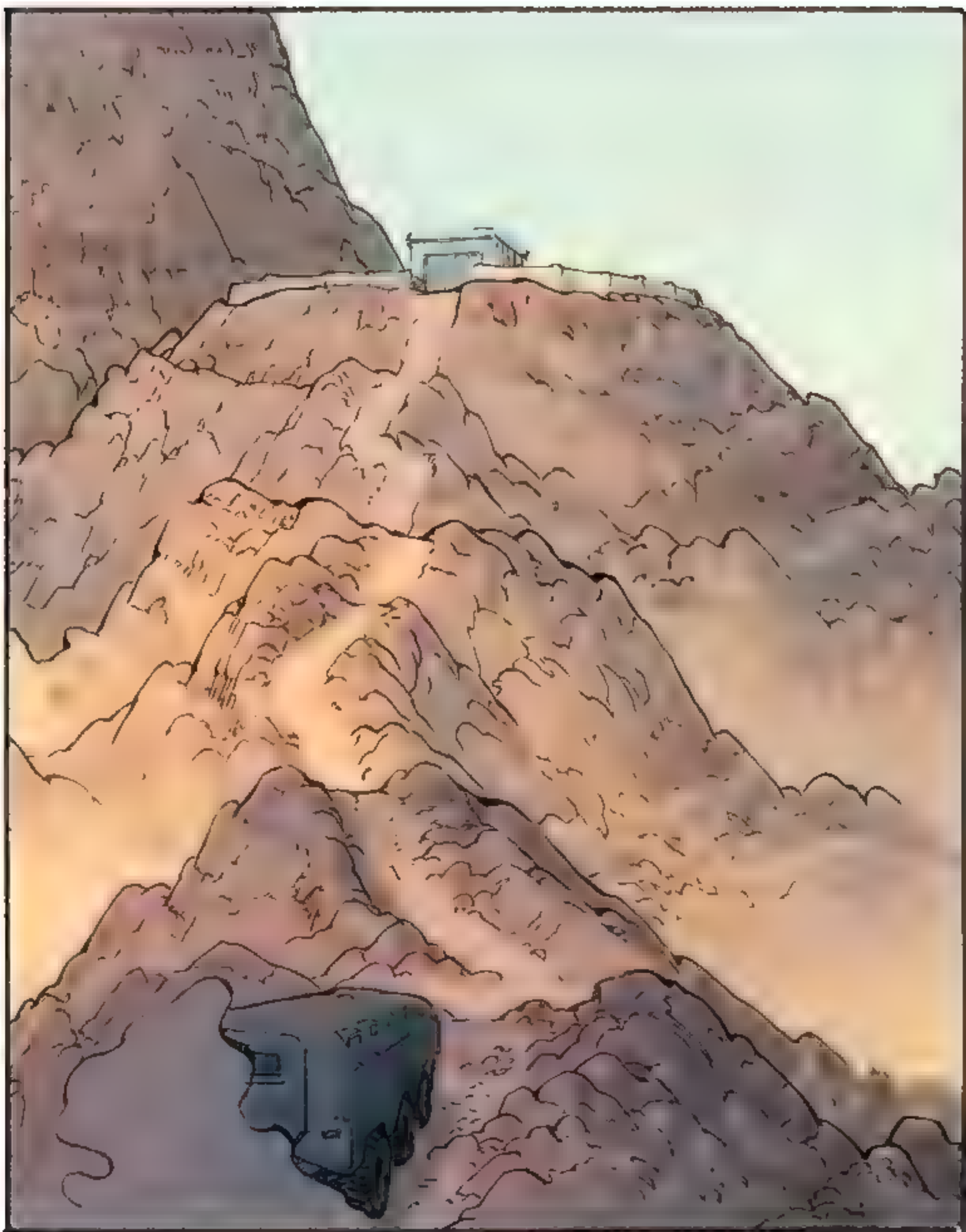
C'MON,
MOVE...

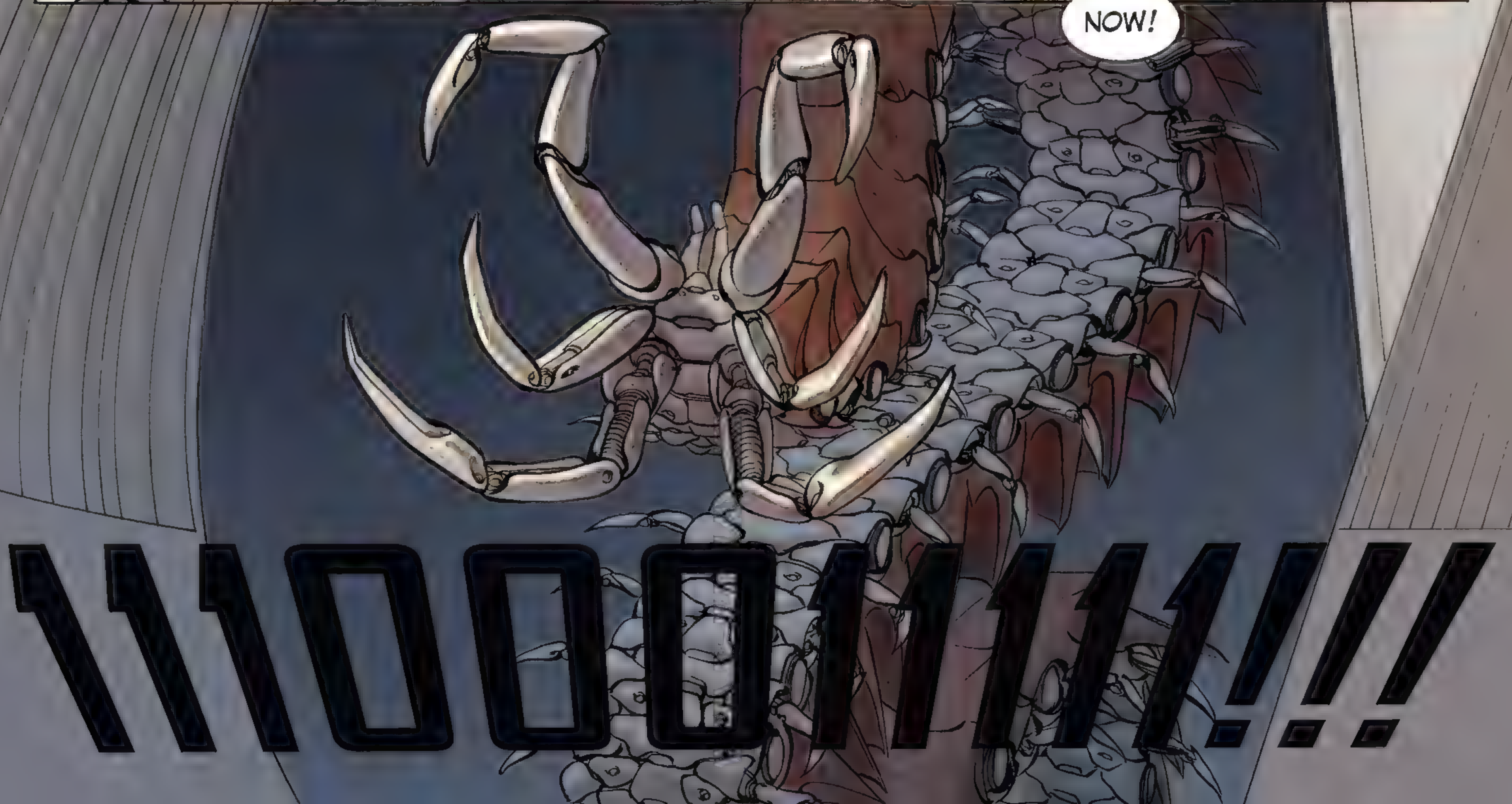
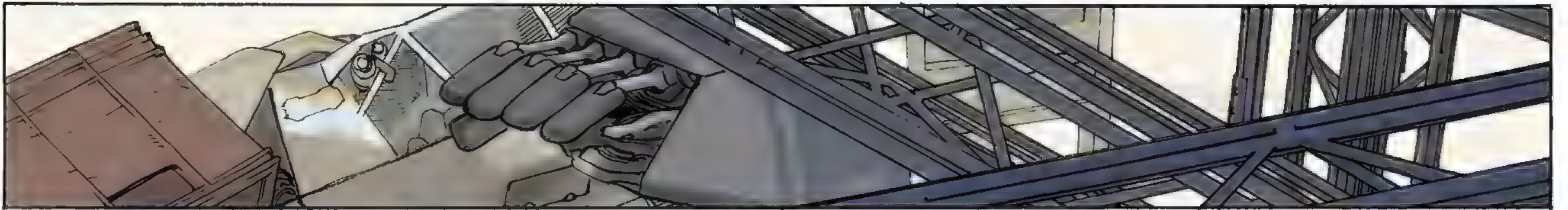
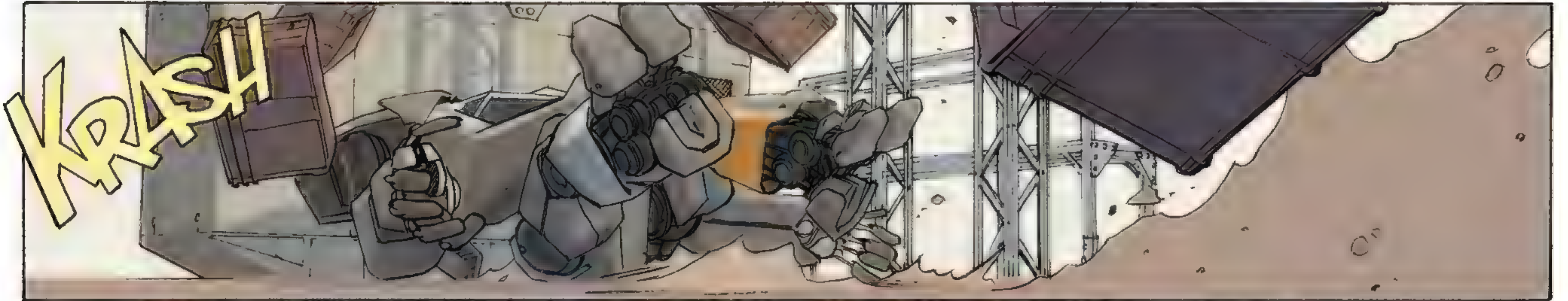


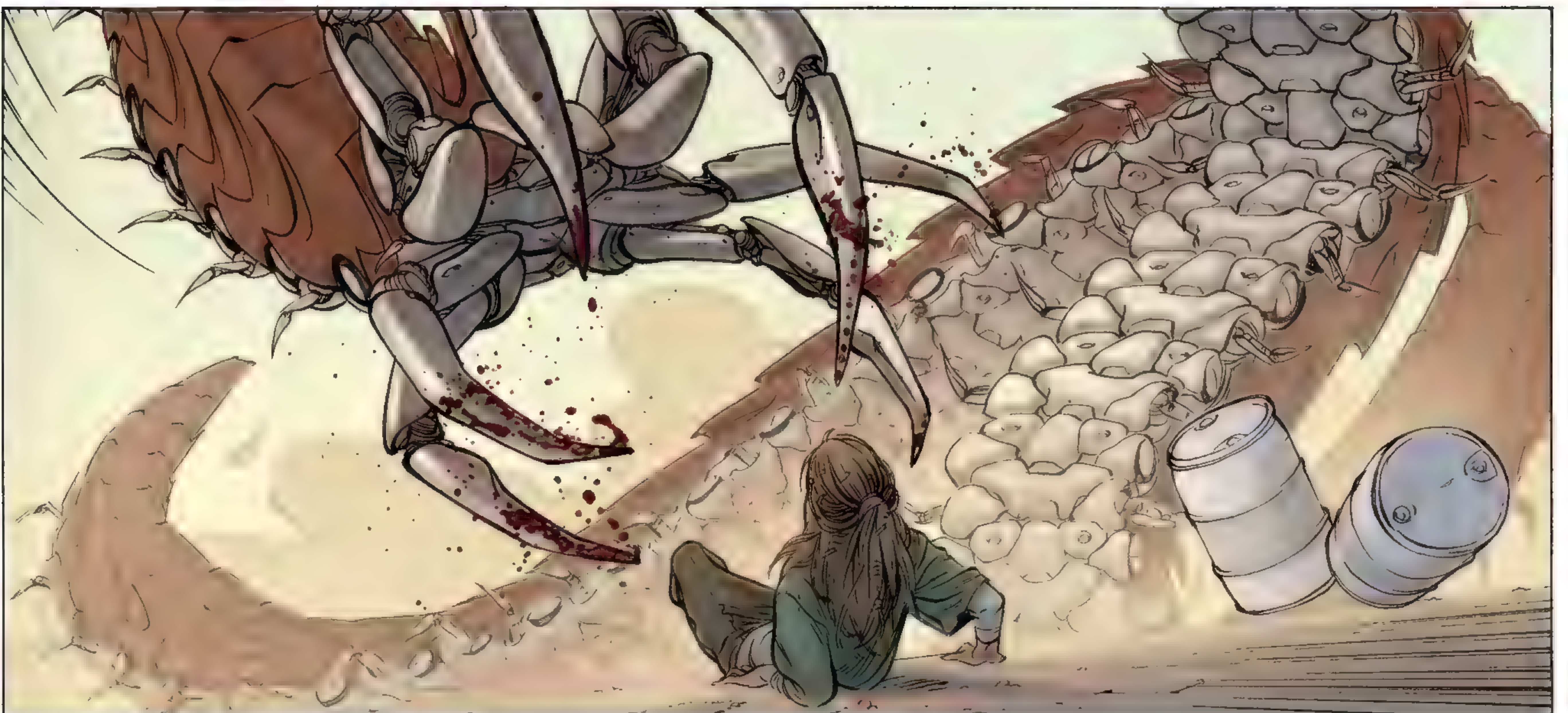
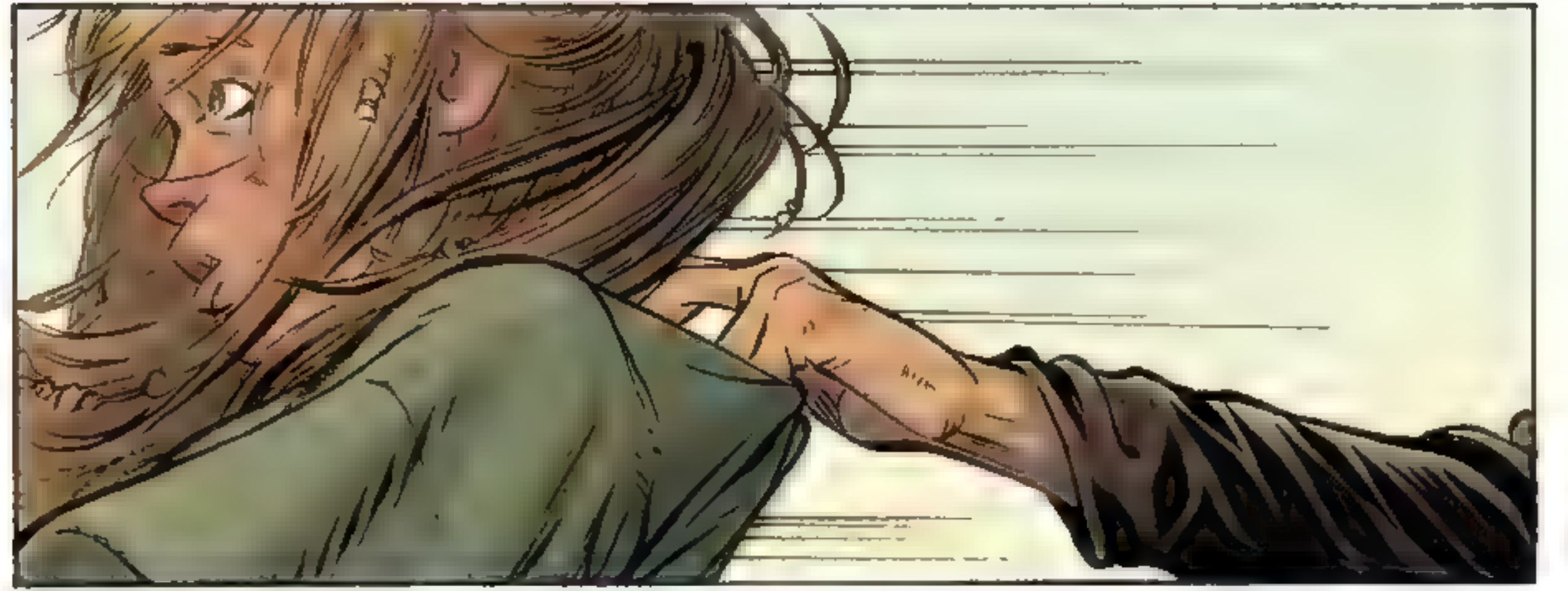
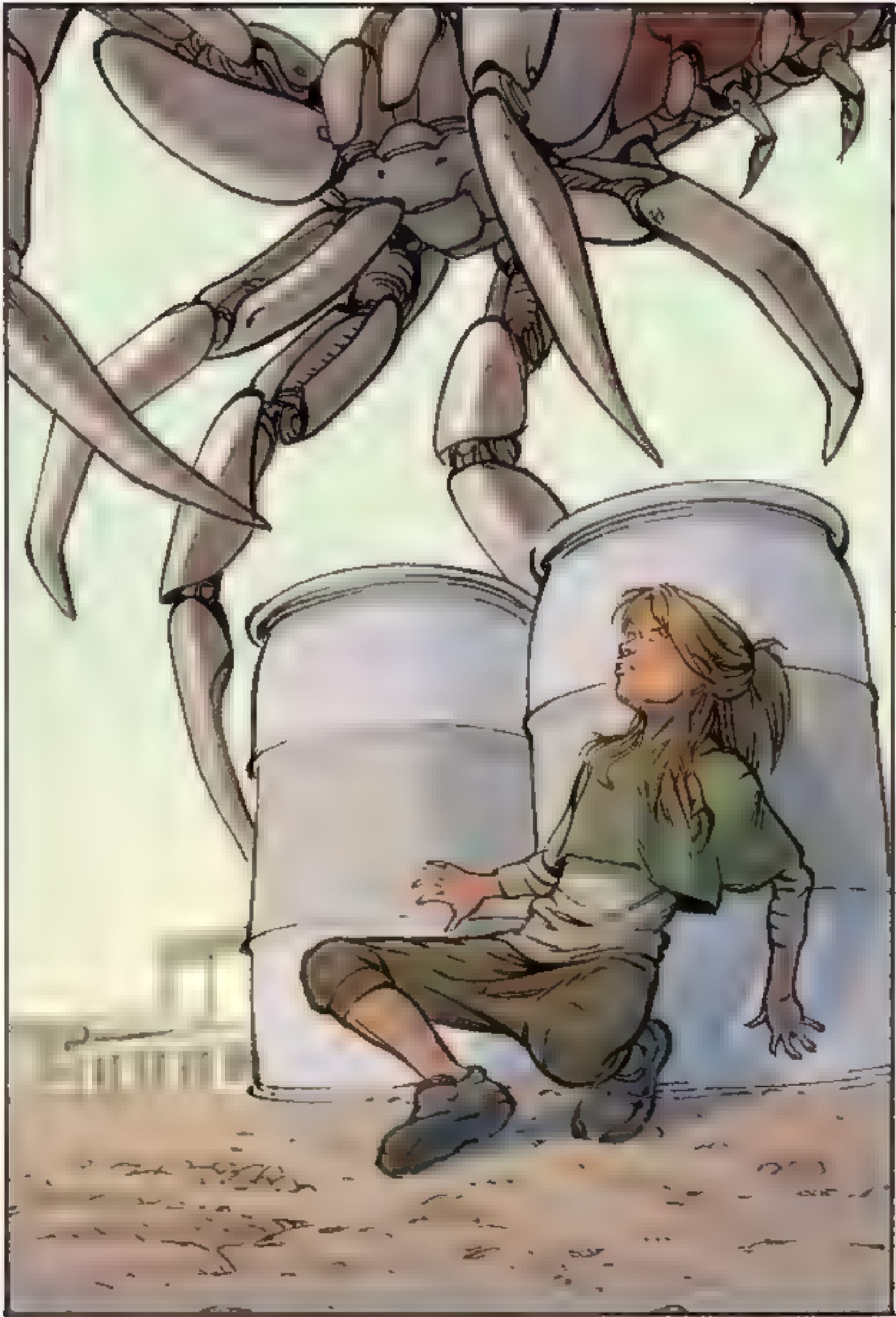
WE'LL SOON SEE
WHAT IT'S GOT IN
STORE FOR US.

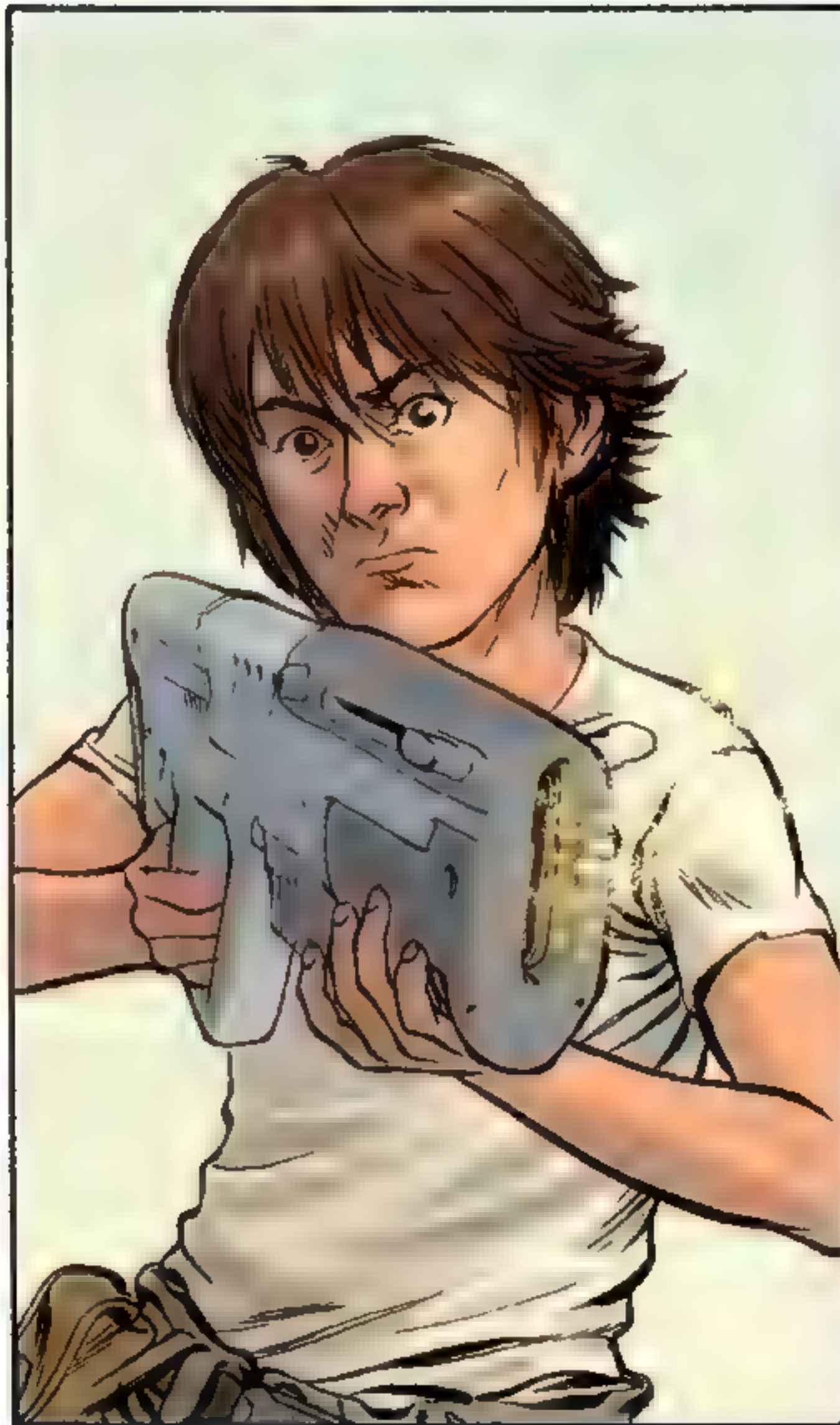
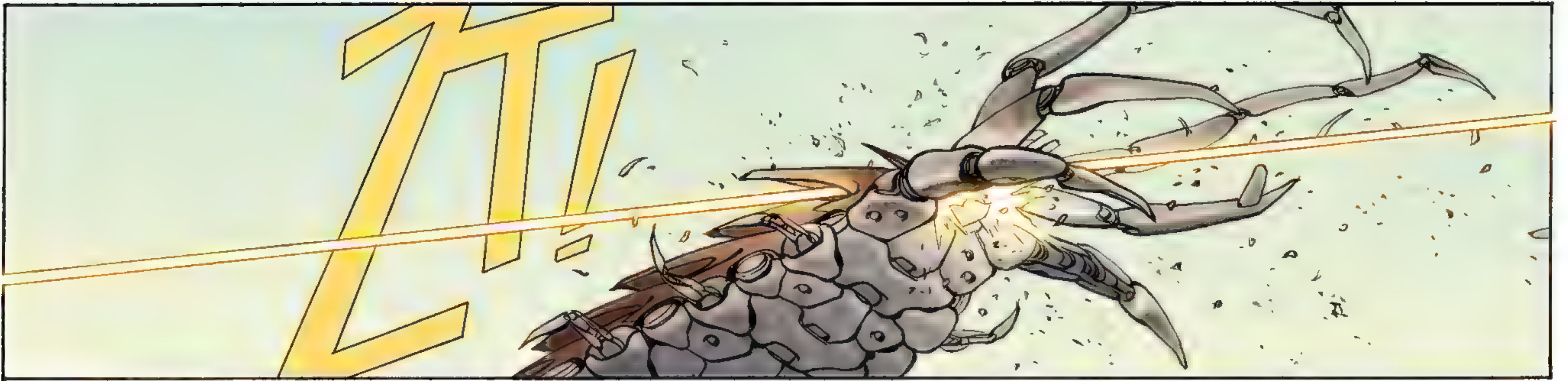




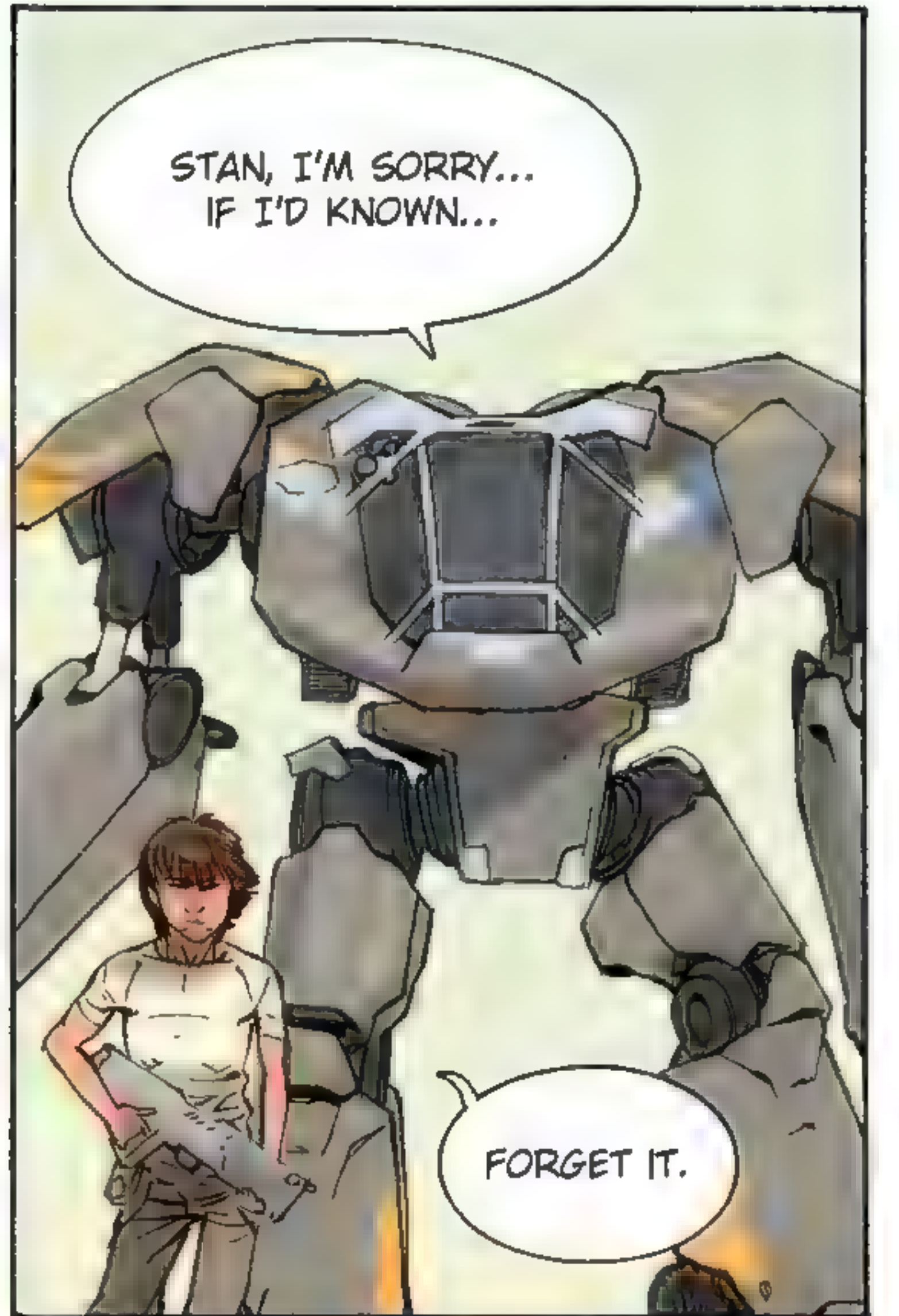






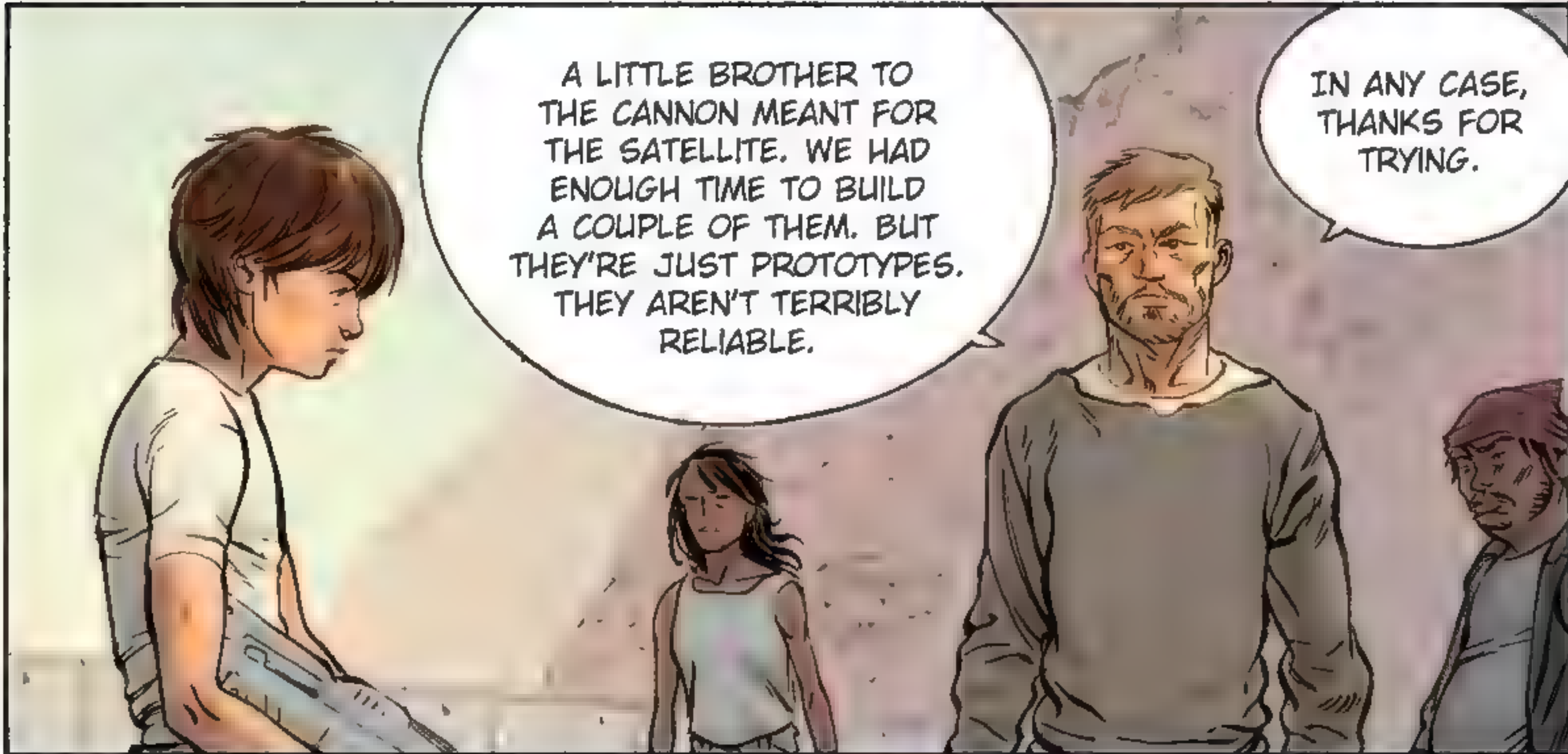


AN E.M.P.
GUN?



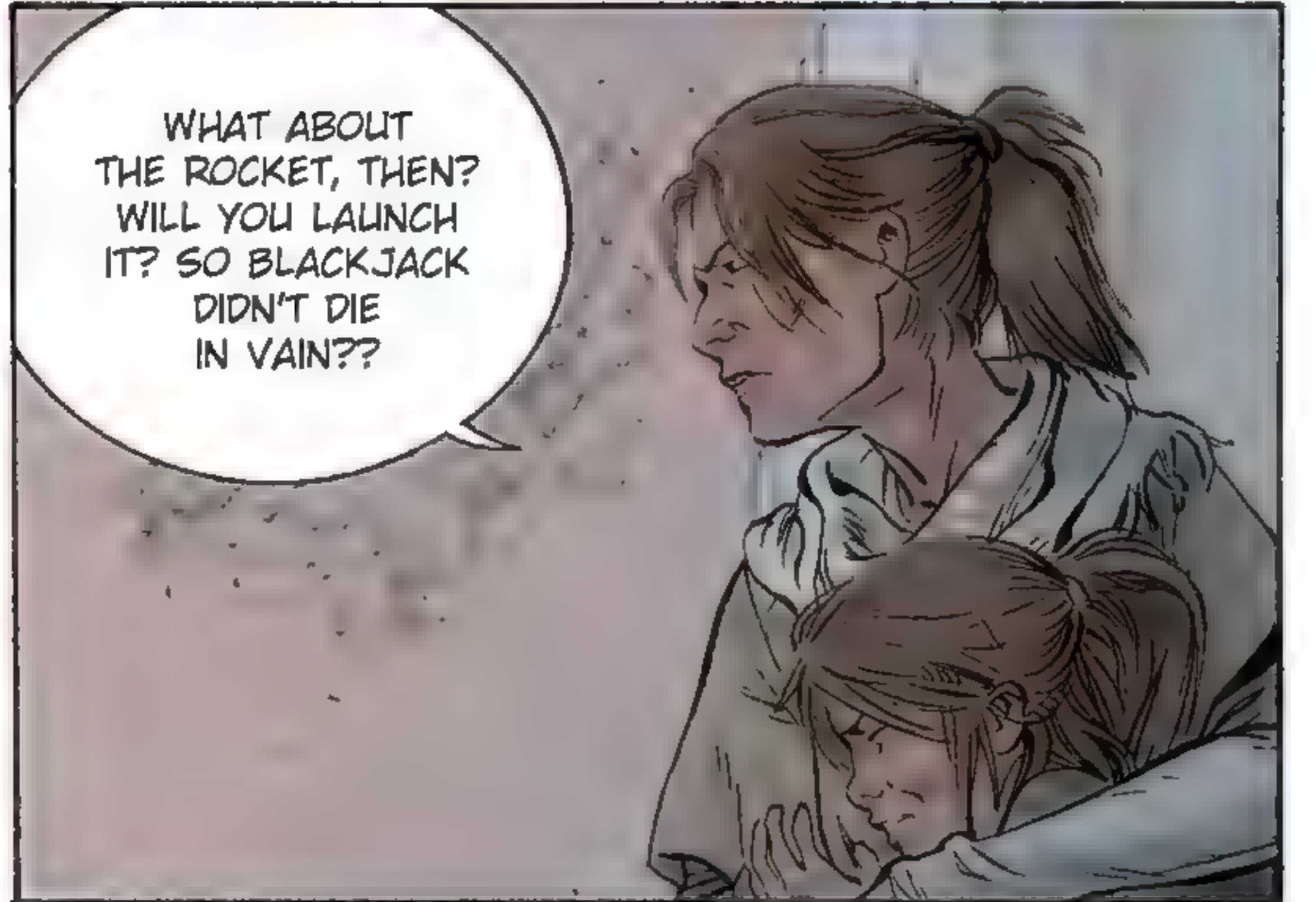
STAN, I'M SORRY...
IF I'D KNOWN...

FORGET IT.



A LITTLE BROTHER TO
THE CANNON MEANT FOR
THE SATELLITE. WE HAD
ENOUGH TIME TO BUILD
A COUPLE OF THEM. BUT
THEY'RE JUST PROTOTYPES.
THEY AREN'T TERRIBLY
RELIABLE.

IN ANY CASE,
THANKS FOR
TRYING.

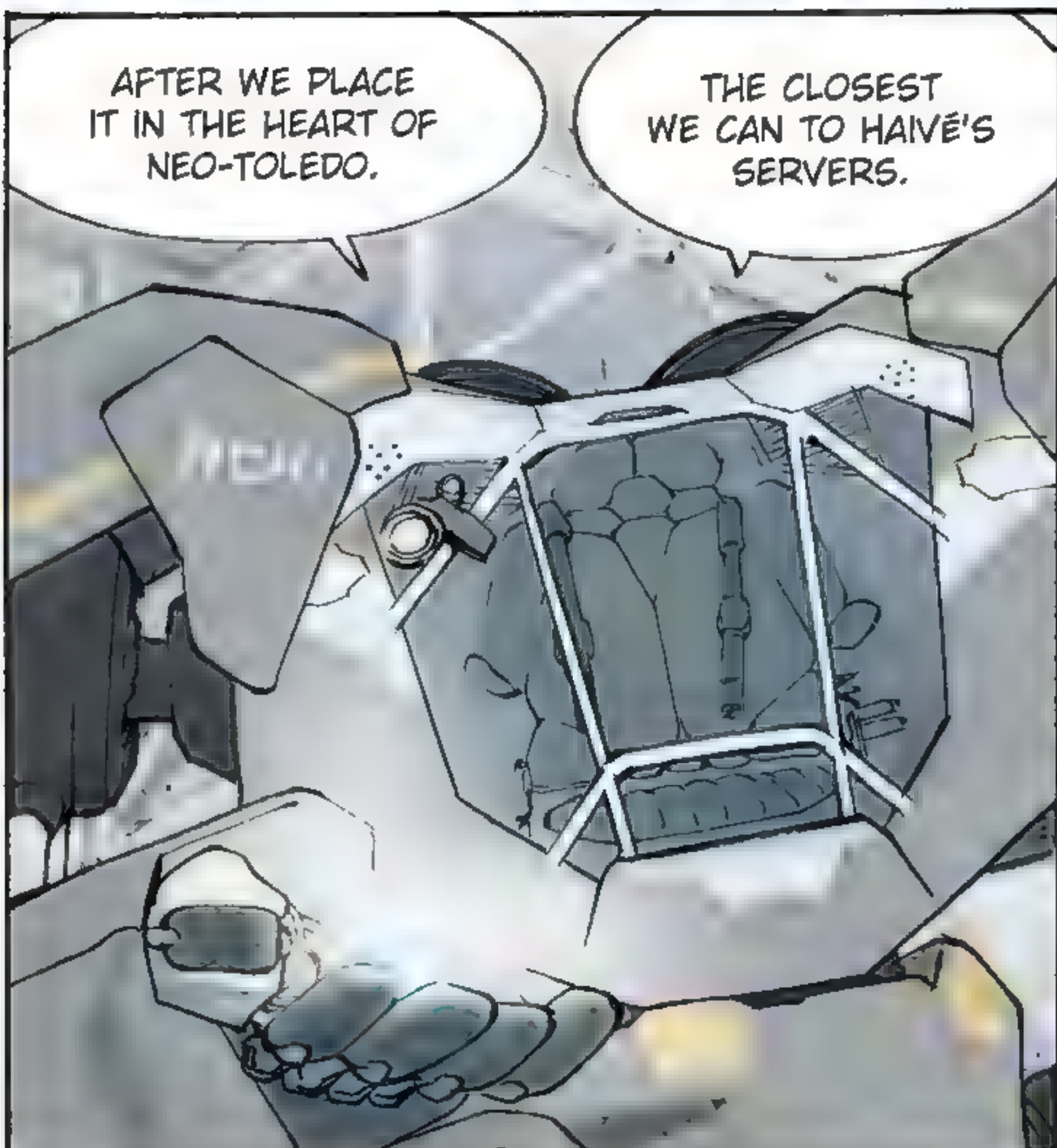
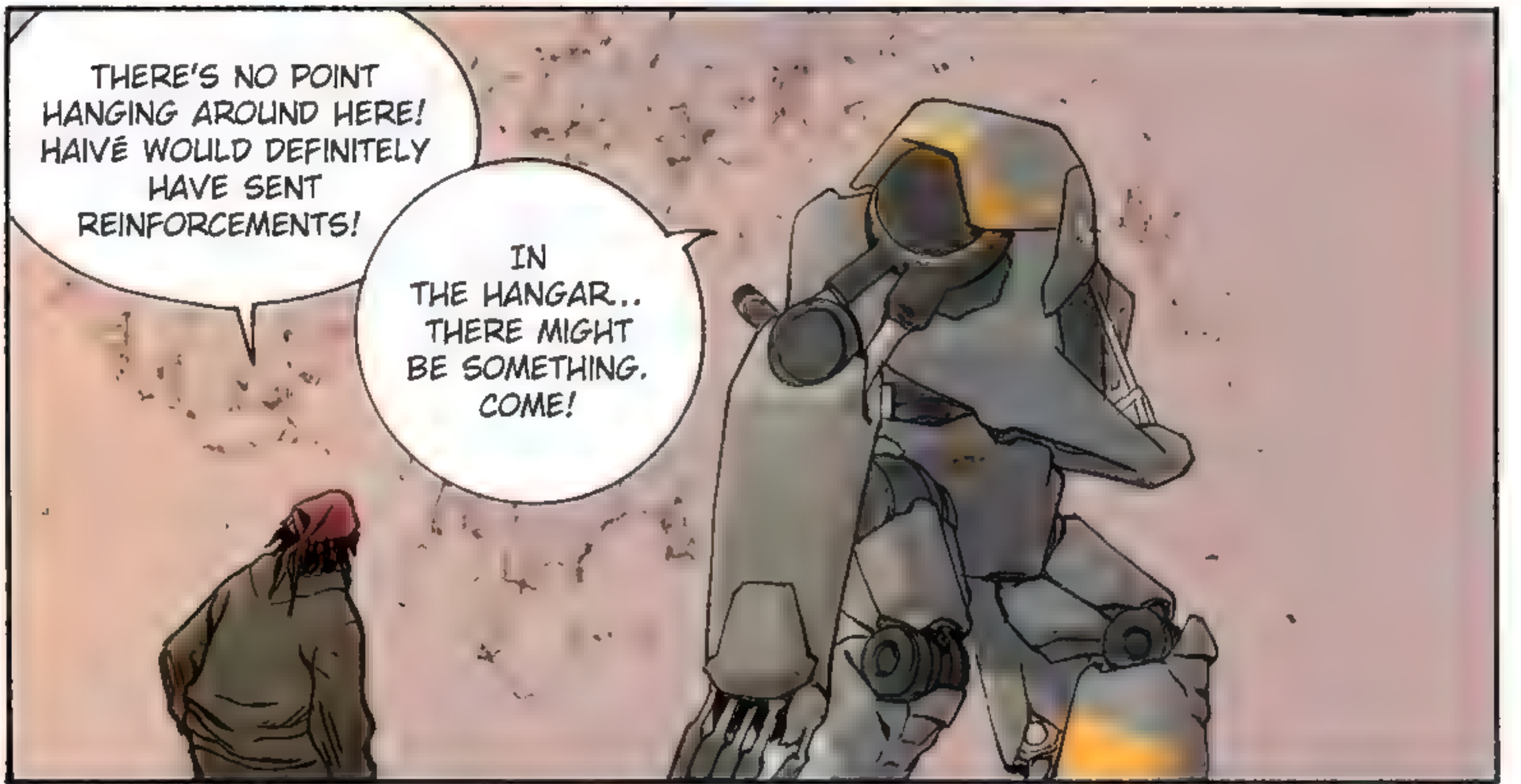
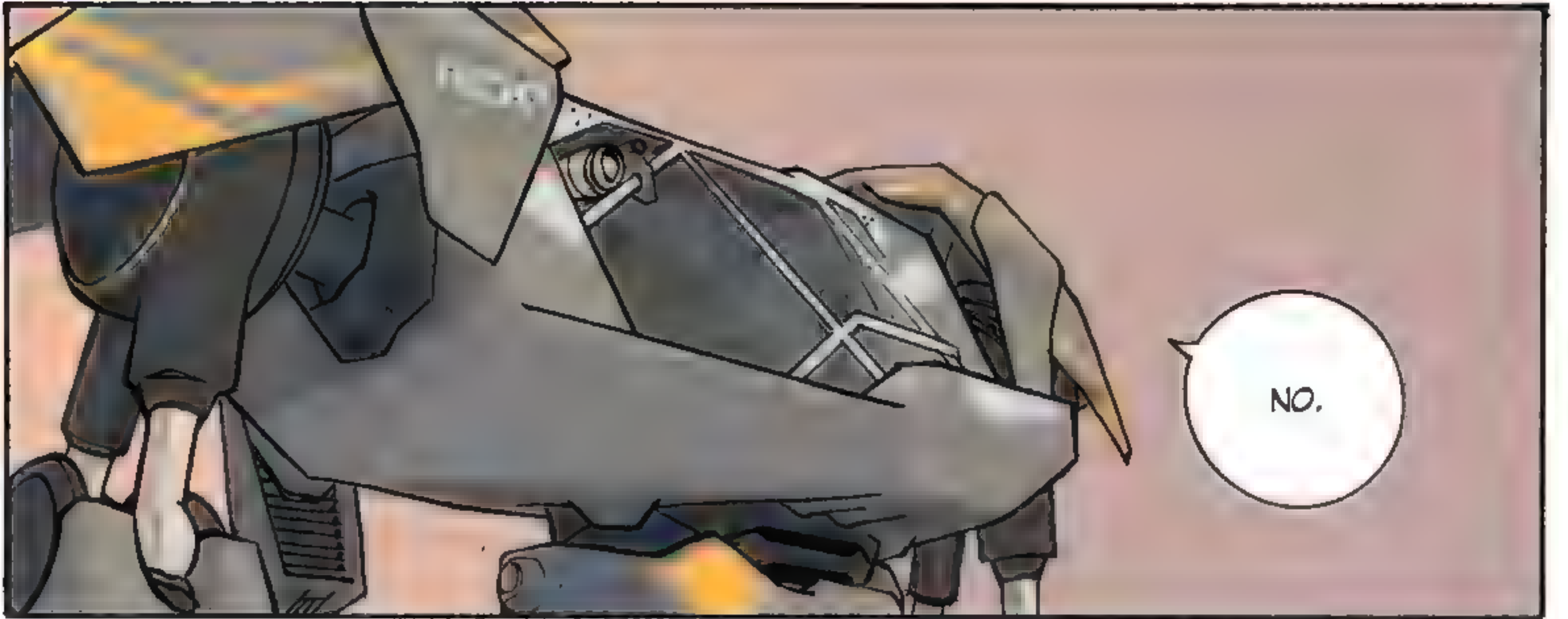
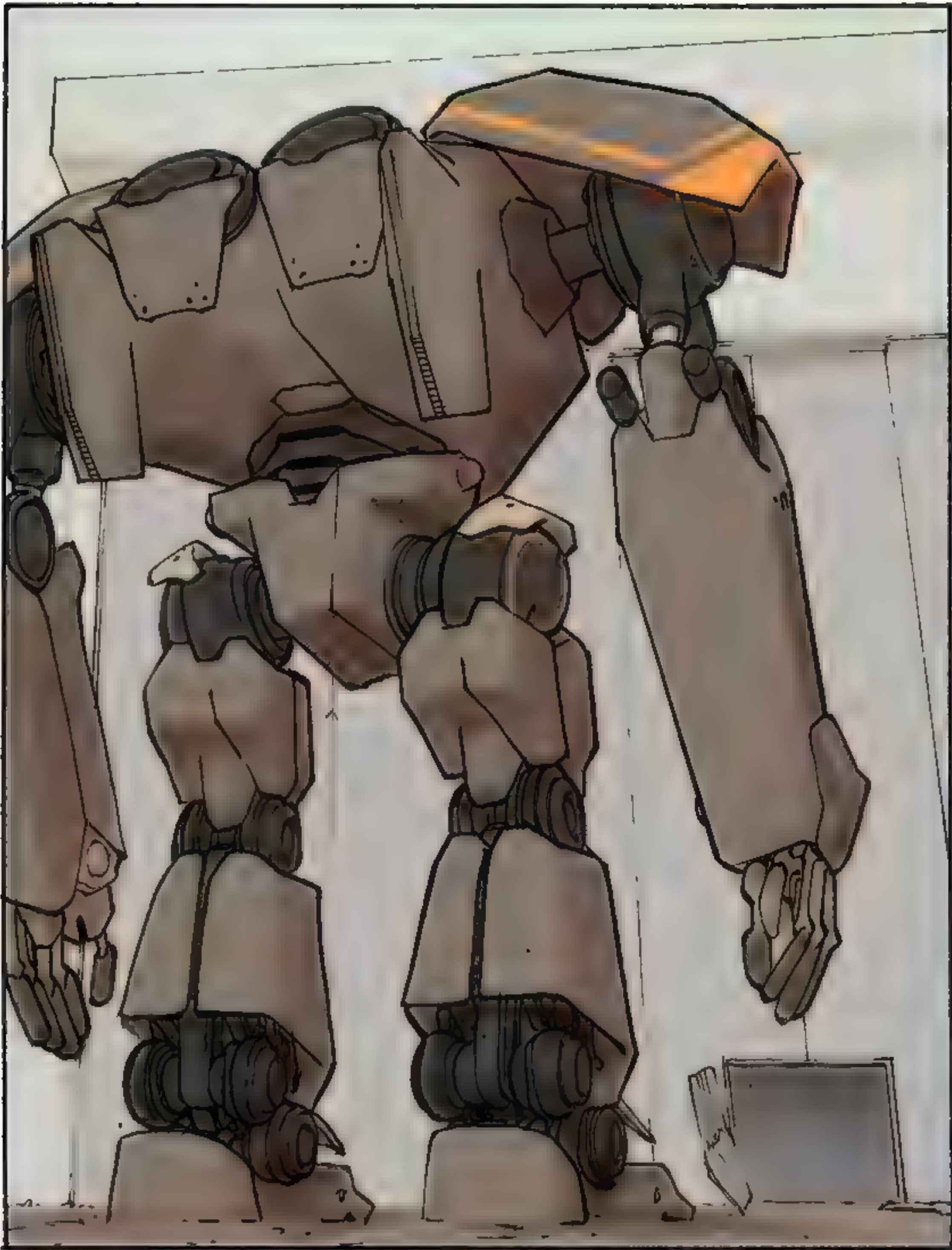


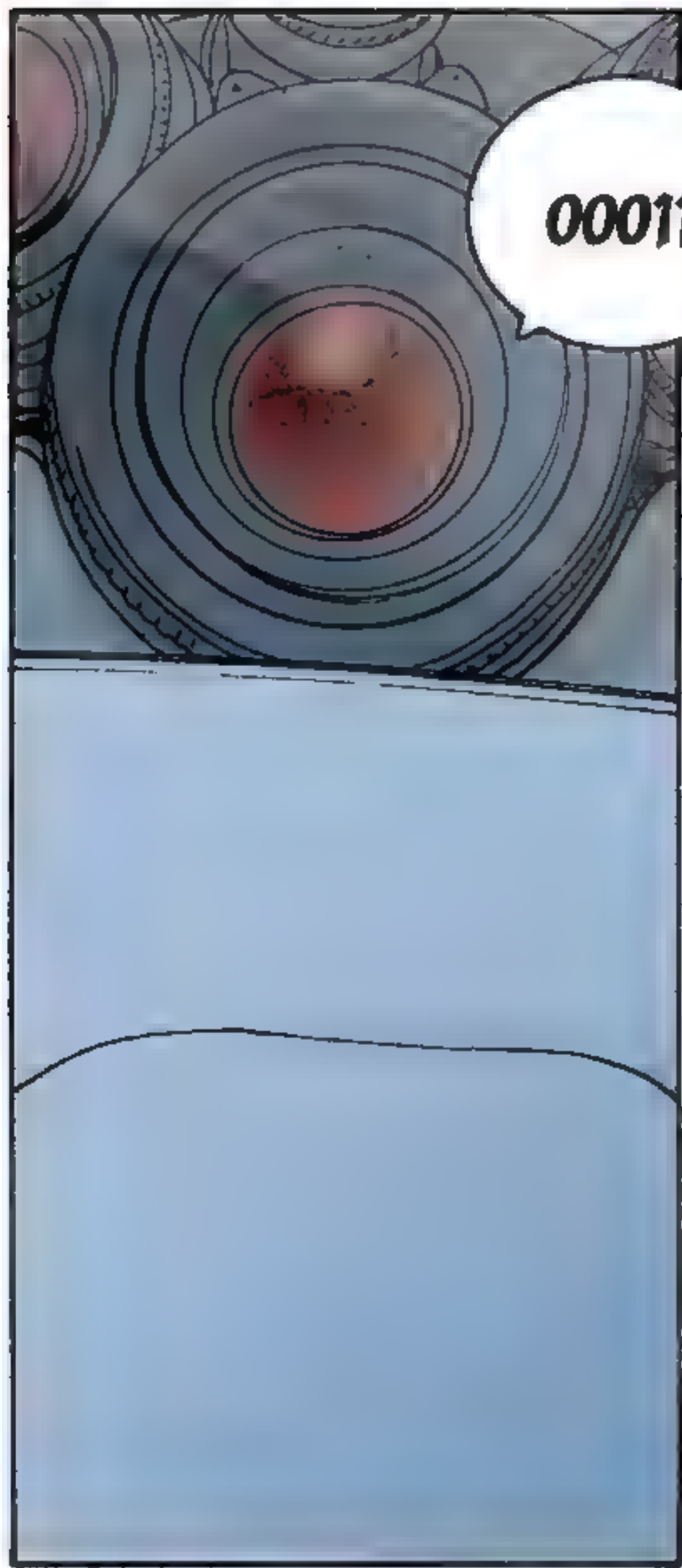
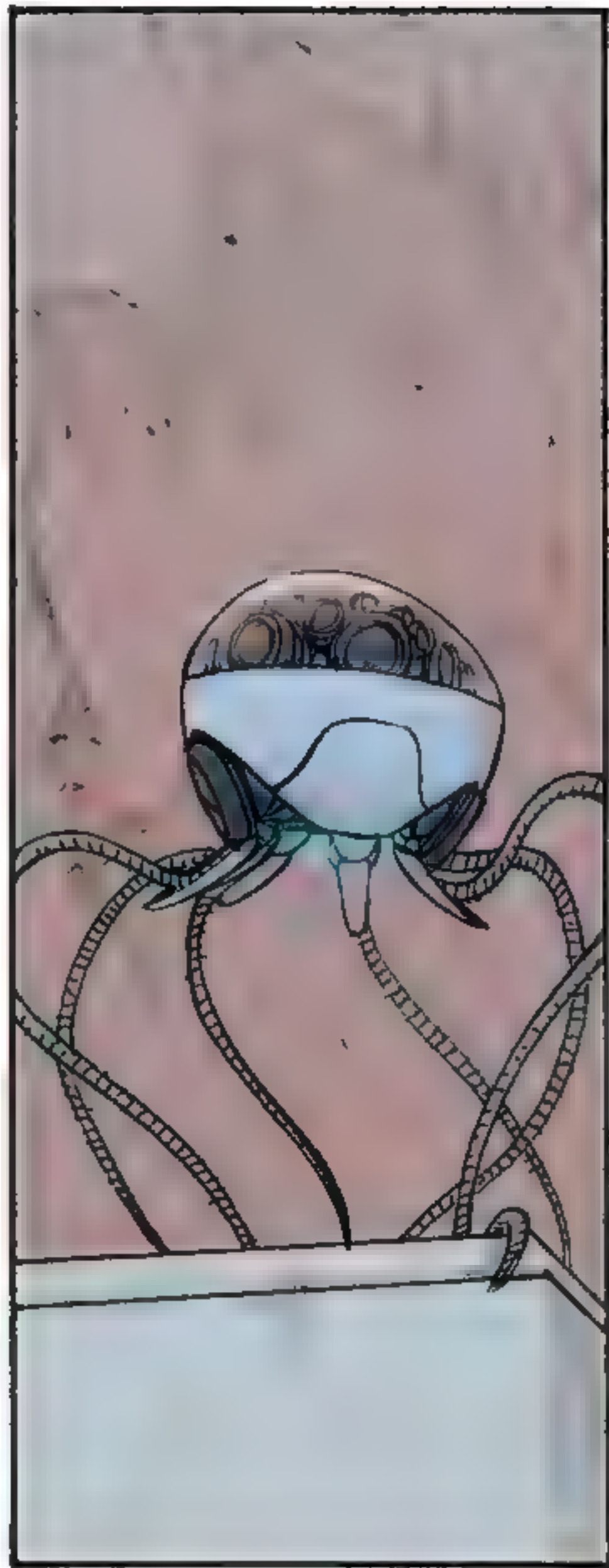
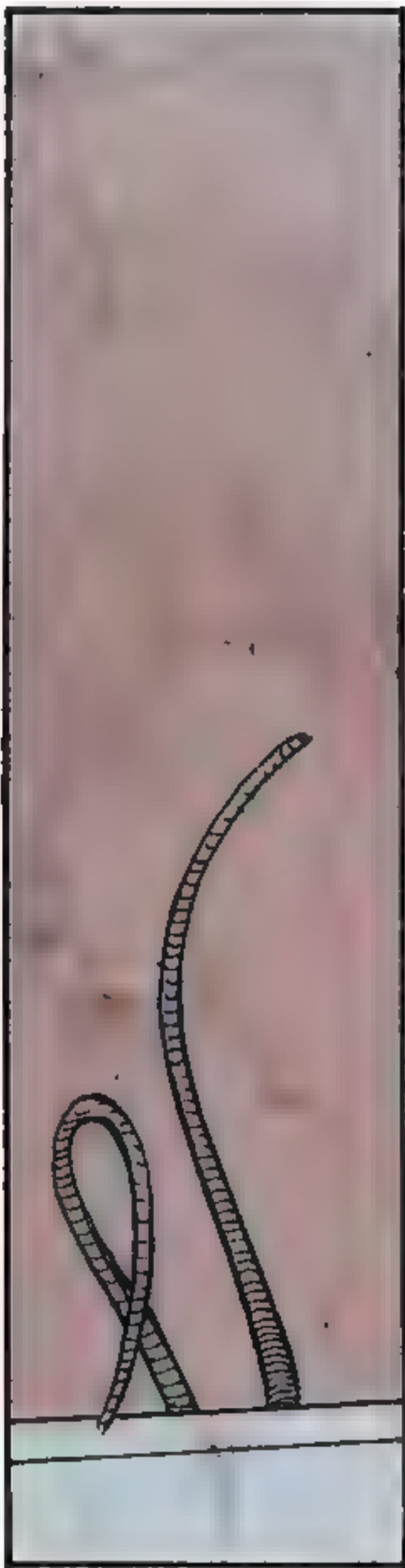
WHAT ABOUT
THE ROCKET, THEN?
WILL YOU LAUNCH
IT? SO BLACKJACK
DIDN'T DIE
IN VAIN??



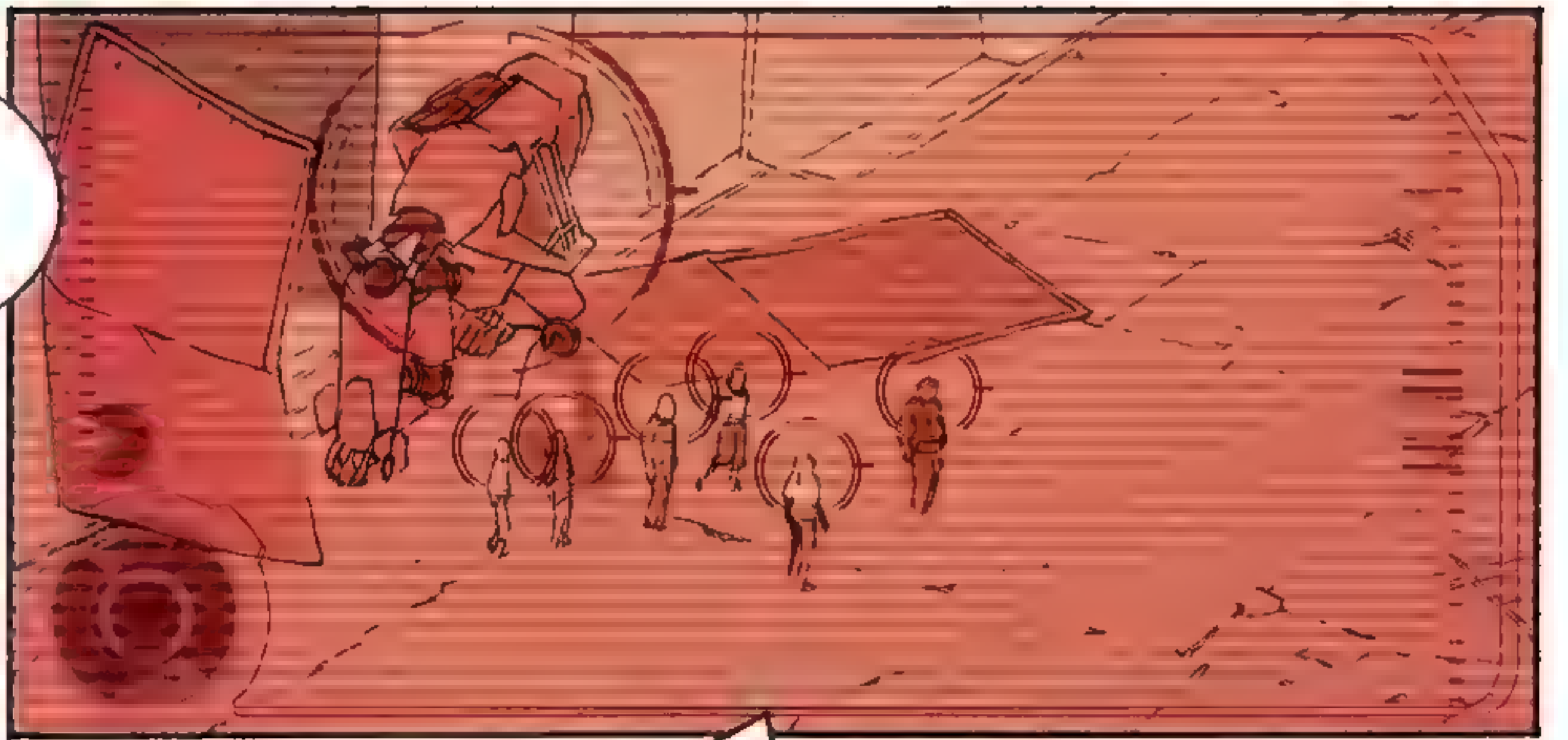
THE CENTIPEDE
DESTROYED IT.

WE CAME FOR
NOTHING.





00011



MAGNUS? WHERE'D YOU GO?

YOU FOUND THE OTHER E.M.P. GUNS?



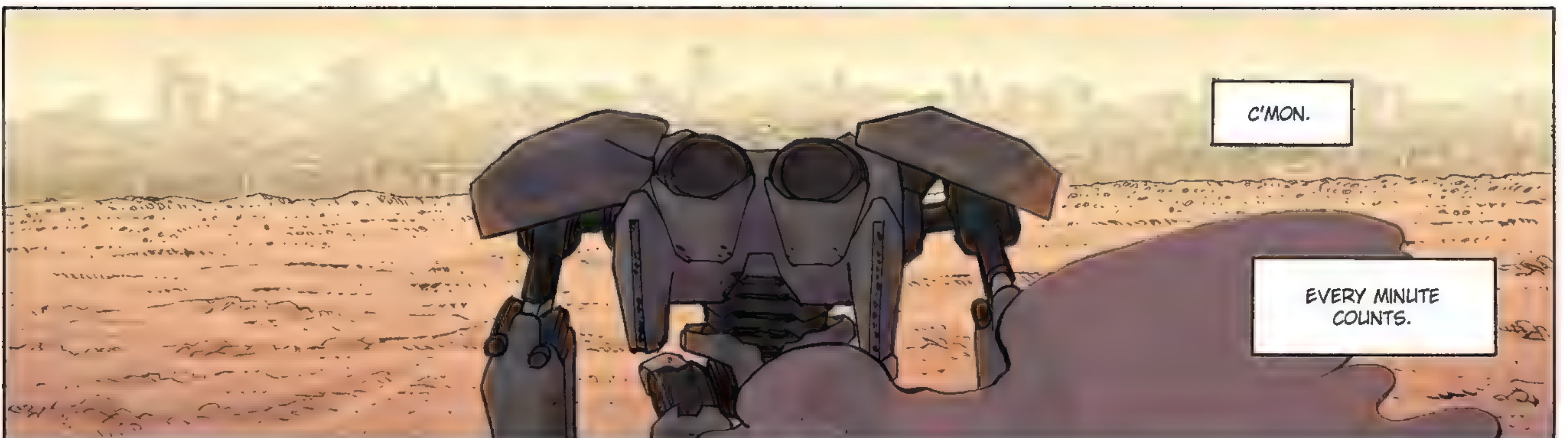
YEAH.



THEY'RE COMING.

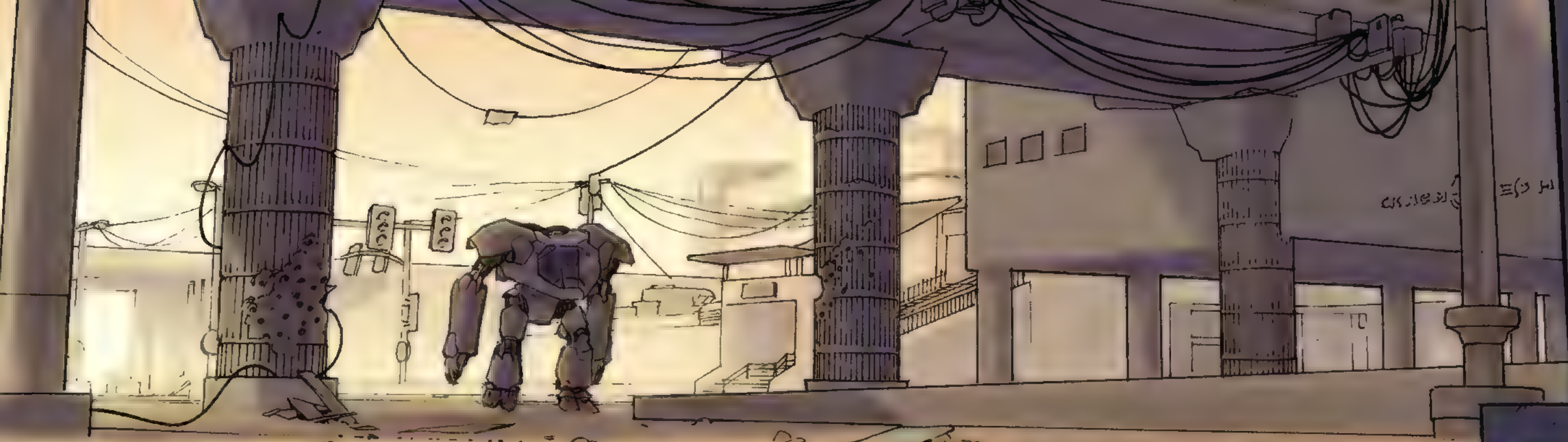
STAN, DANIEL... YOU GOTTA GO. TAKE THE CORE, AND THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK.

THE REST OF US, IT'S BETTER IF WE STAY HERE. ALL WE CAN DO IS HOPE TO DISTRACT HAIVE'S ATTENTION.



C'MON.

EVERY MINUTE COUNTS.



I DIDN'T
THINK IT'D BE
SO... CALM
OUT HERE.

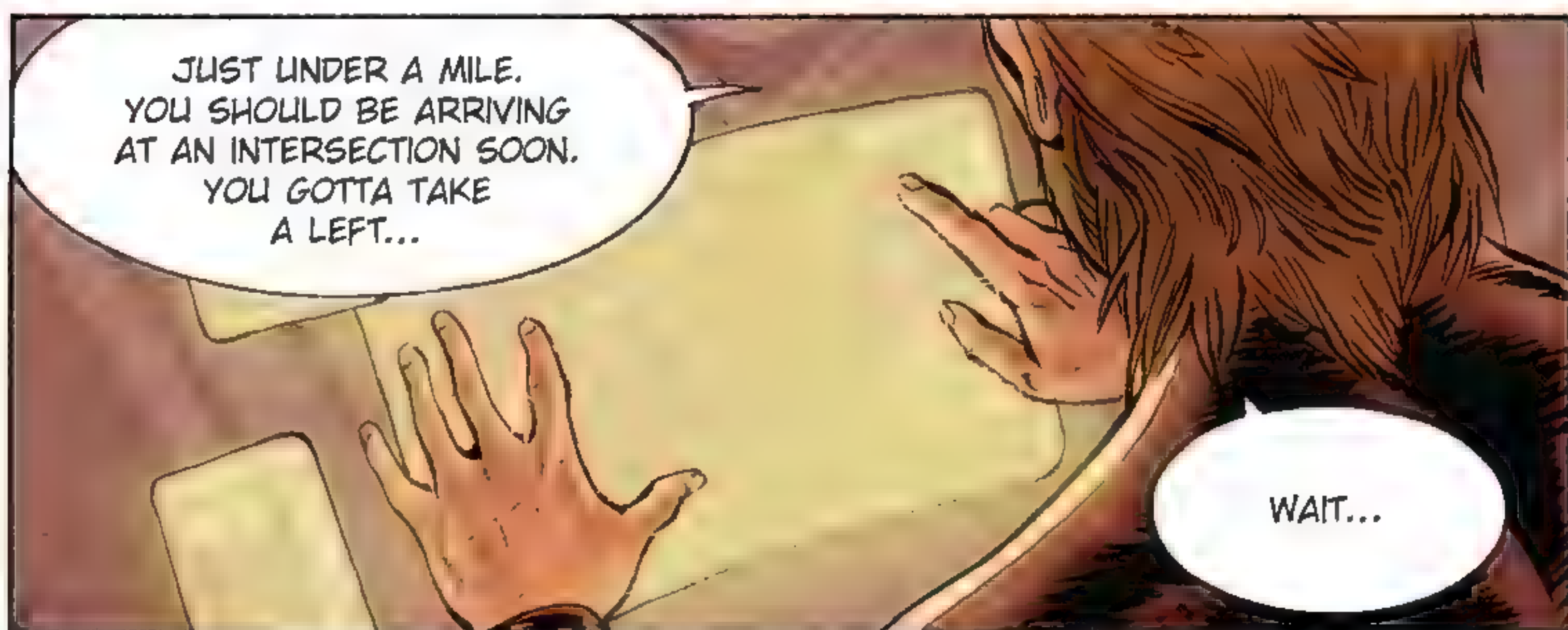


MOST OF THE MACHINES AROUND YOU ARE
IN STANDBY MODE. HAIVE'S SAVING ENERGY.
IT'S CONCENTRATED ITS RESOURCES WHERE
IT NEEDS THEM MOST...

WHILE YOU CONTROL
ROCKY UNDER
THE CLOAK, HE LOOKS
LIKE ANY OTHER ROBOT.
IT'D BE BEST TO
AVOID DRAWING
ATTENTION...

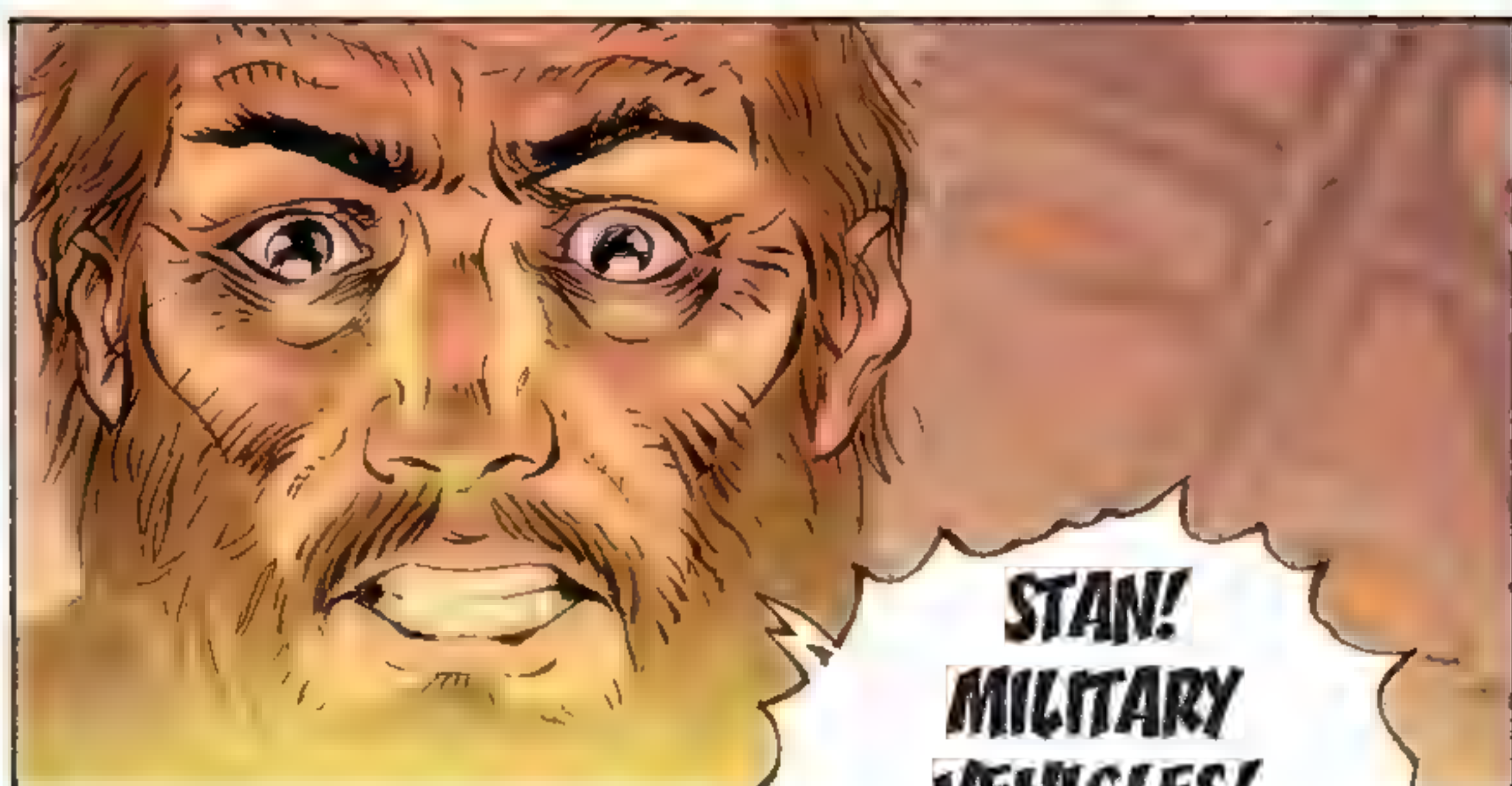


IS THE SERVER
BUILDING FAR
FROM HERE?

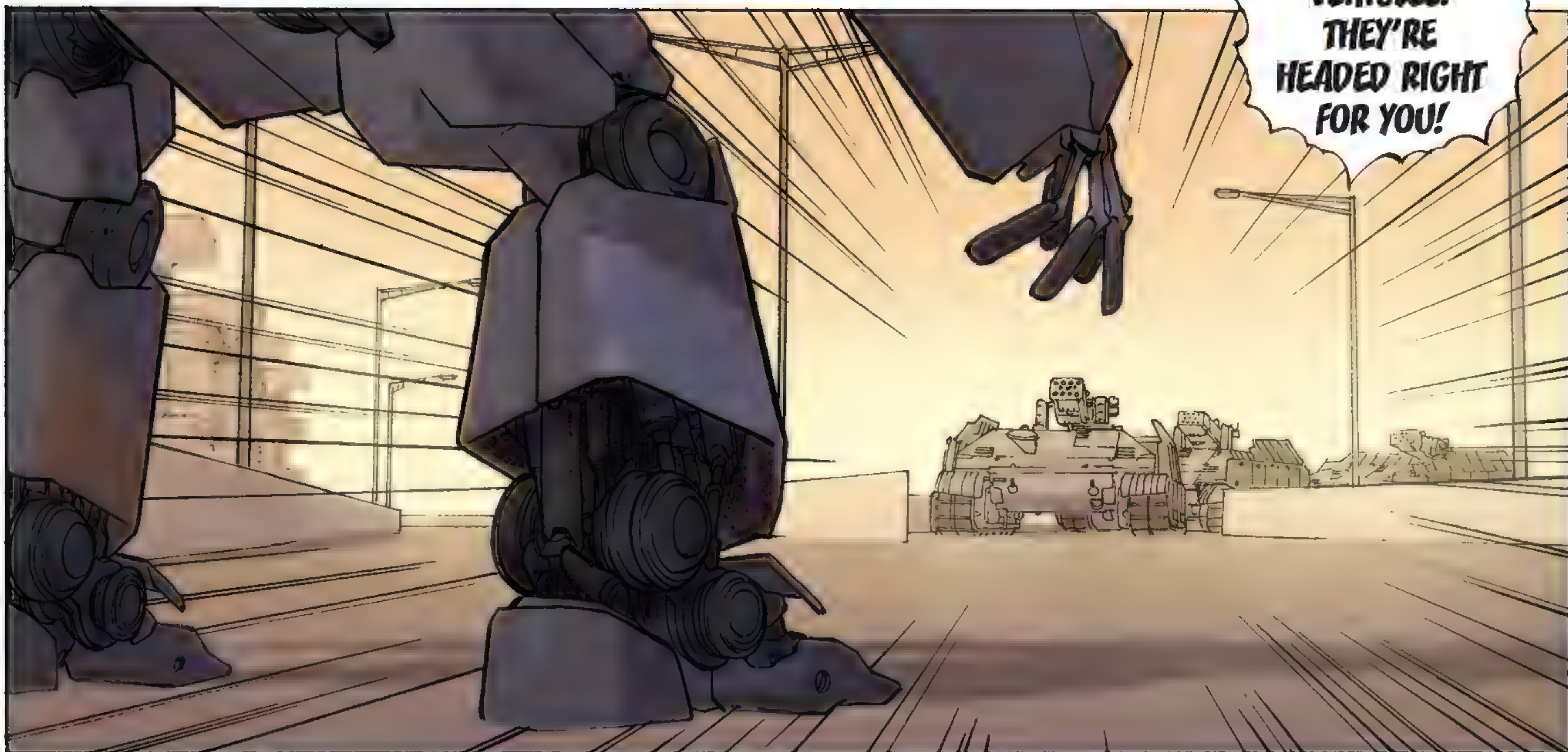


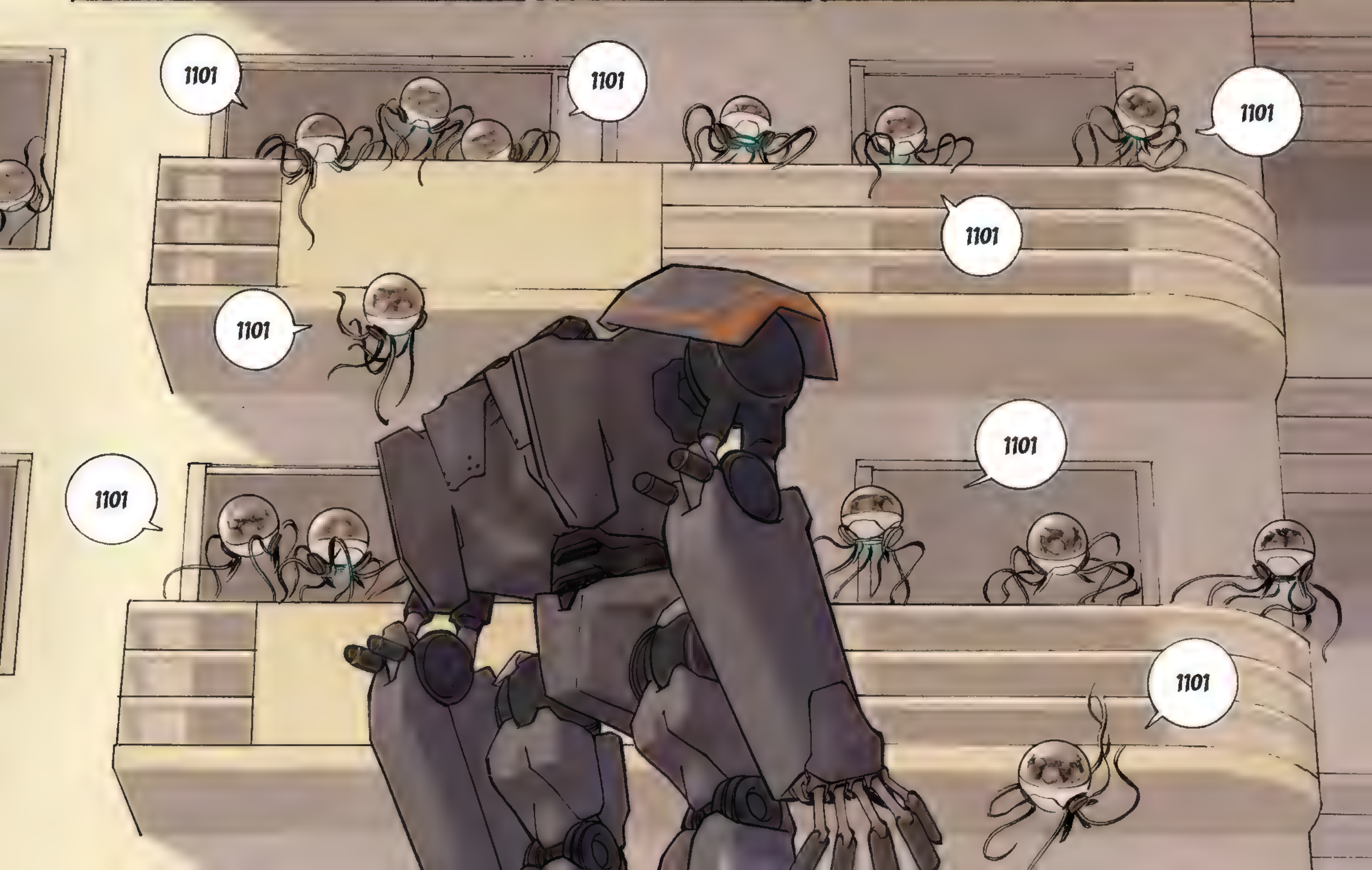
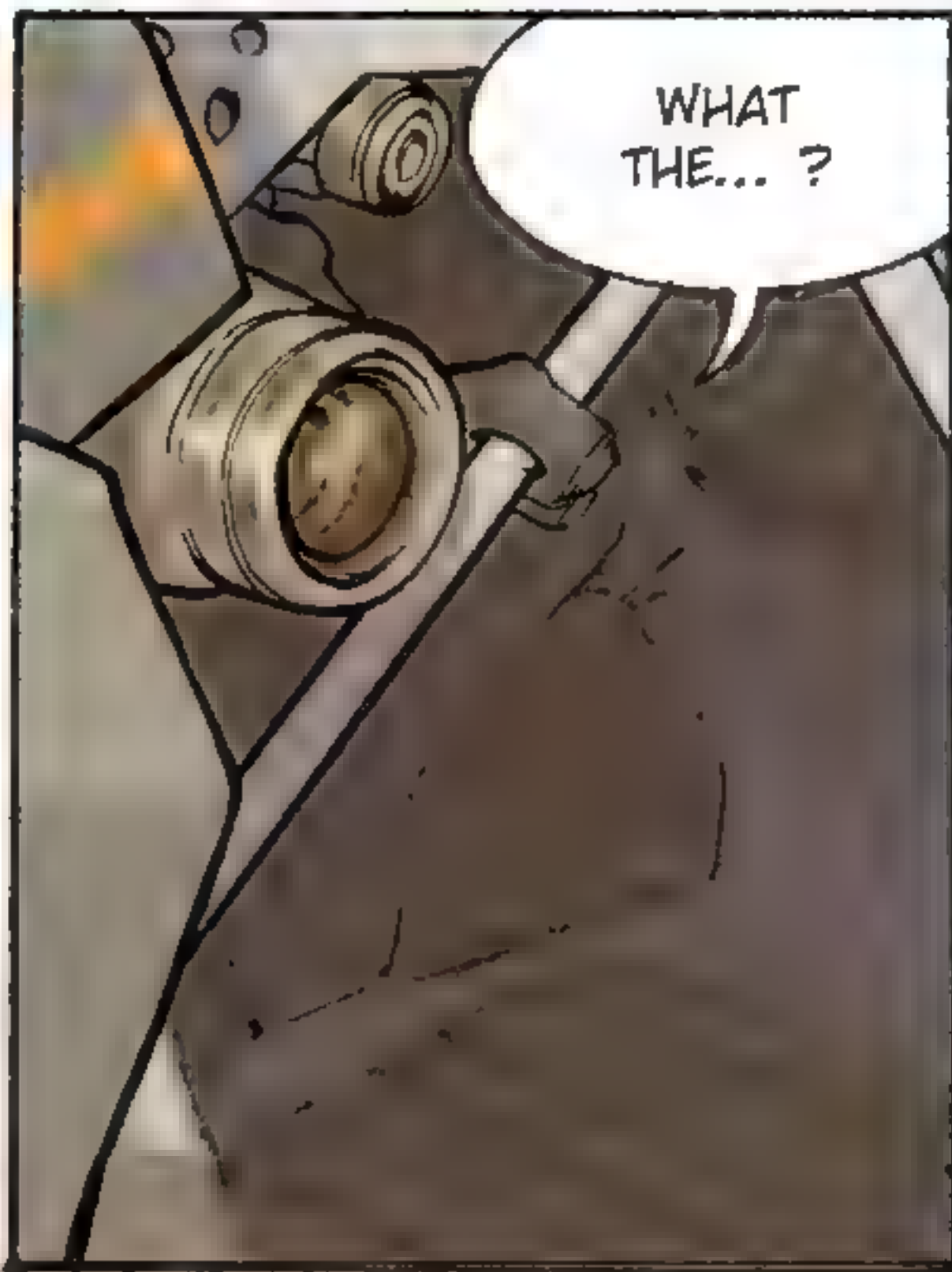
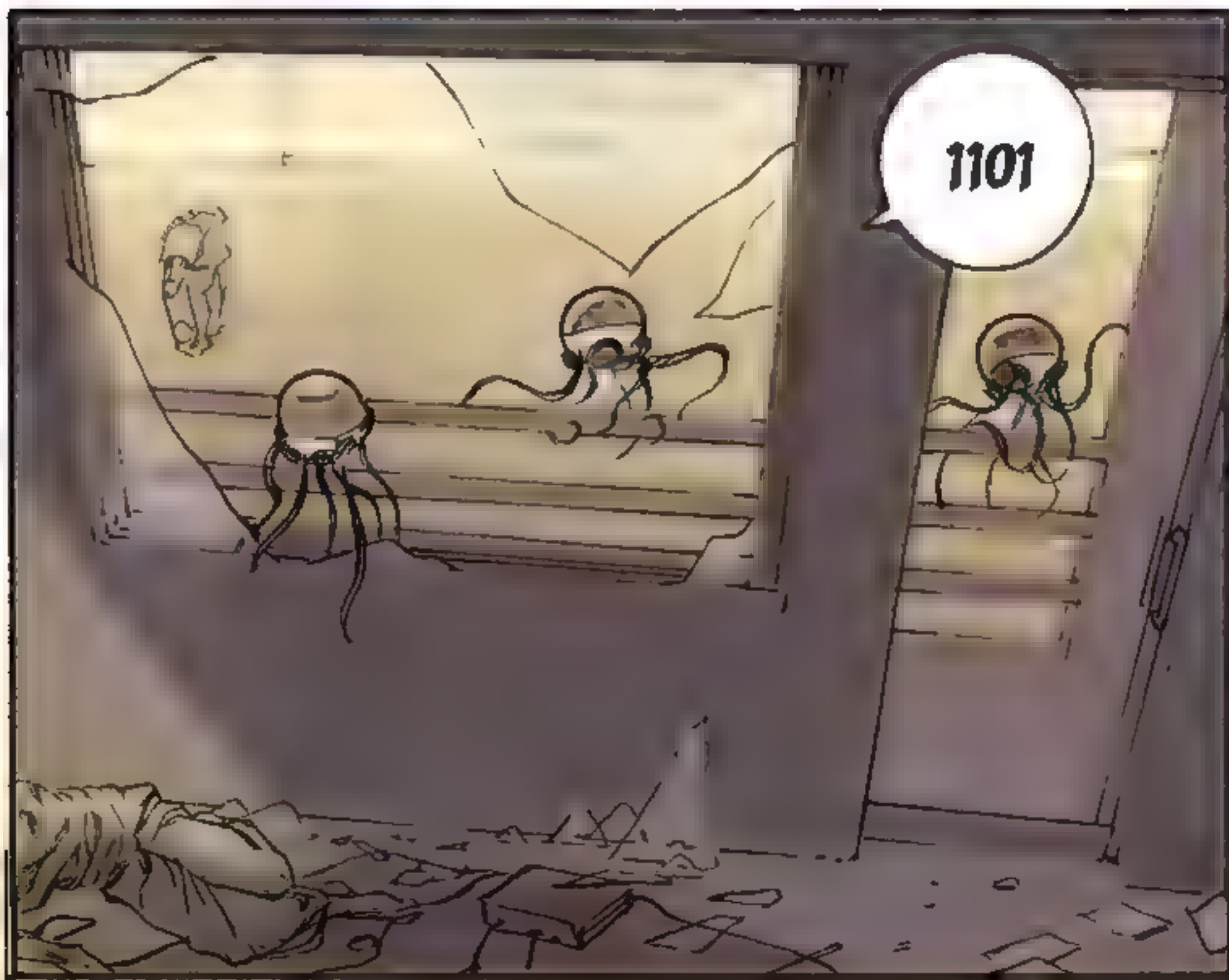
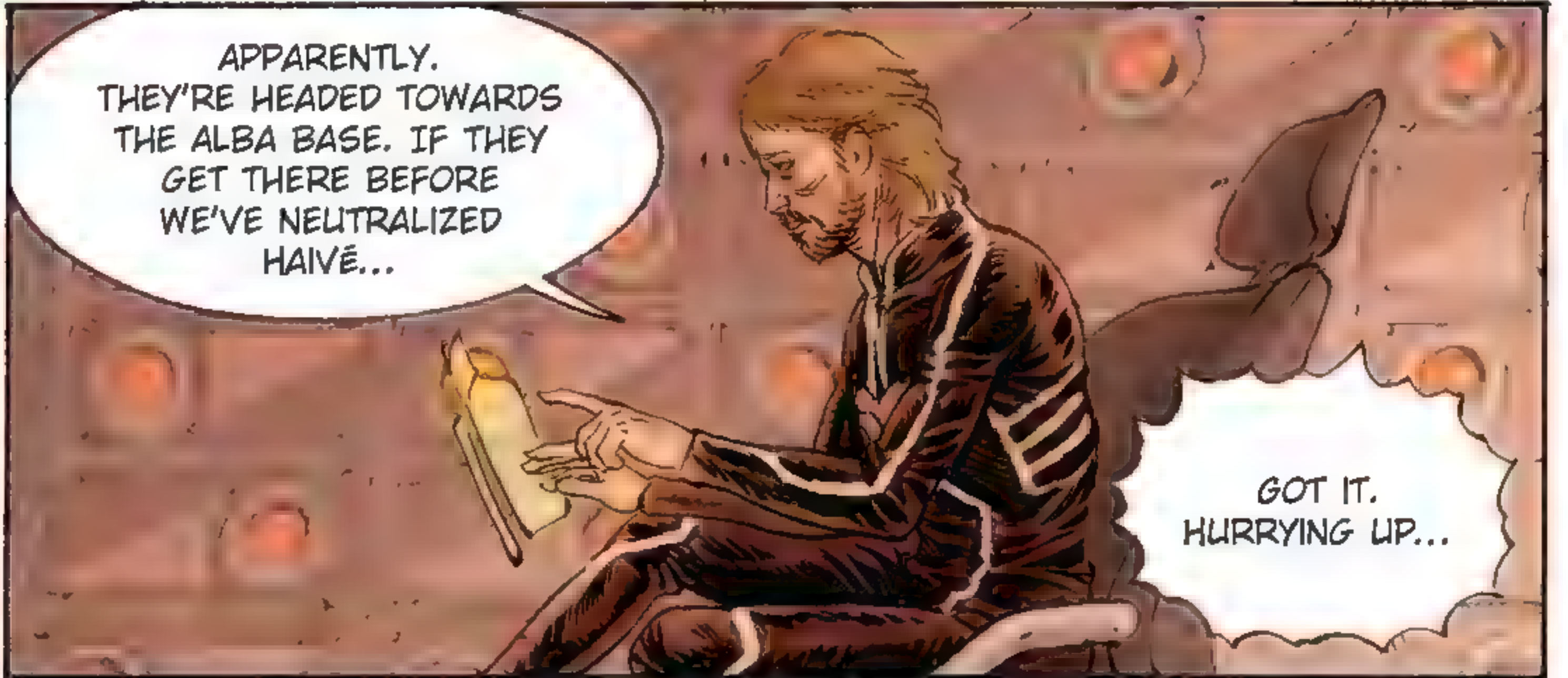
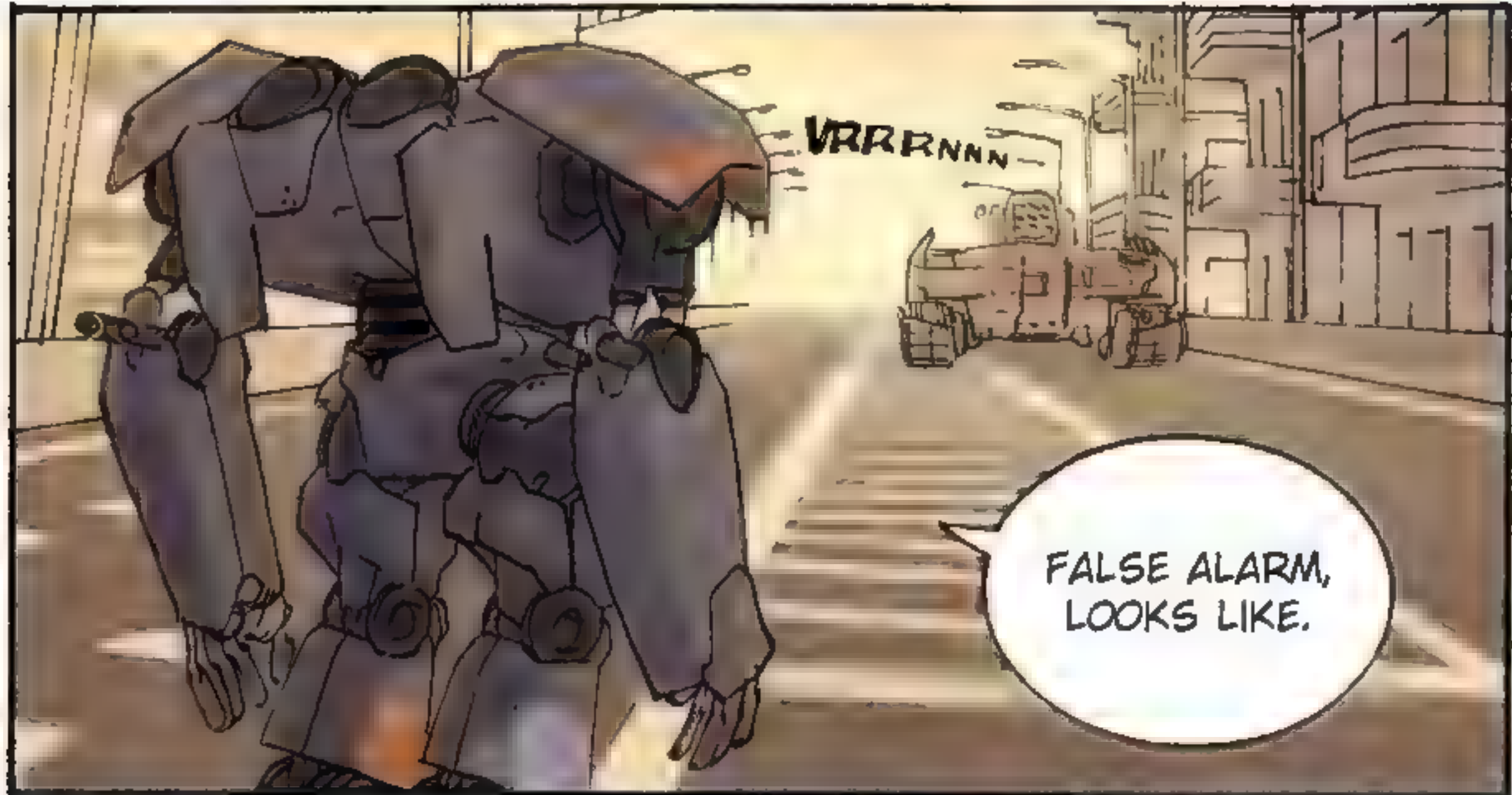
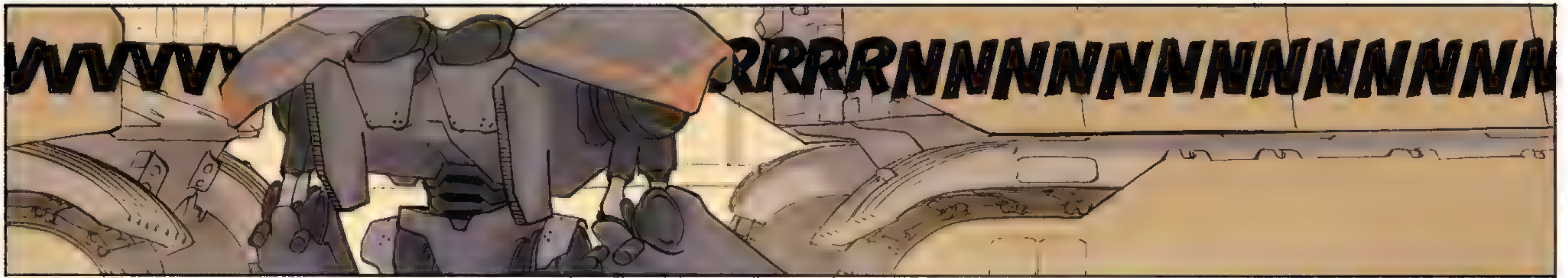
JUST UNDER A MILE.
YOU SHOULD BE ARRIVING
AT AN INTERSECTION SOON.
YOU GOTTA TAKE
A LEFT...

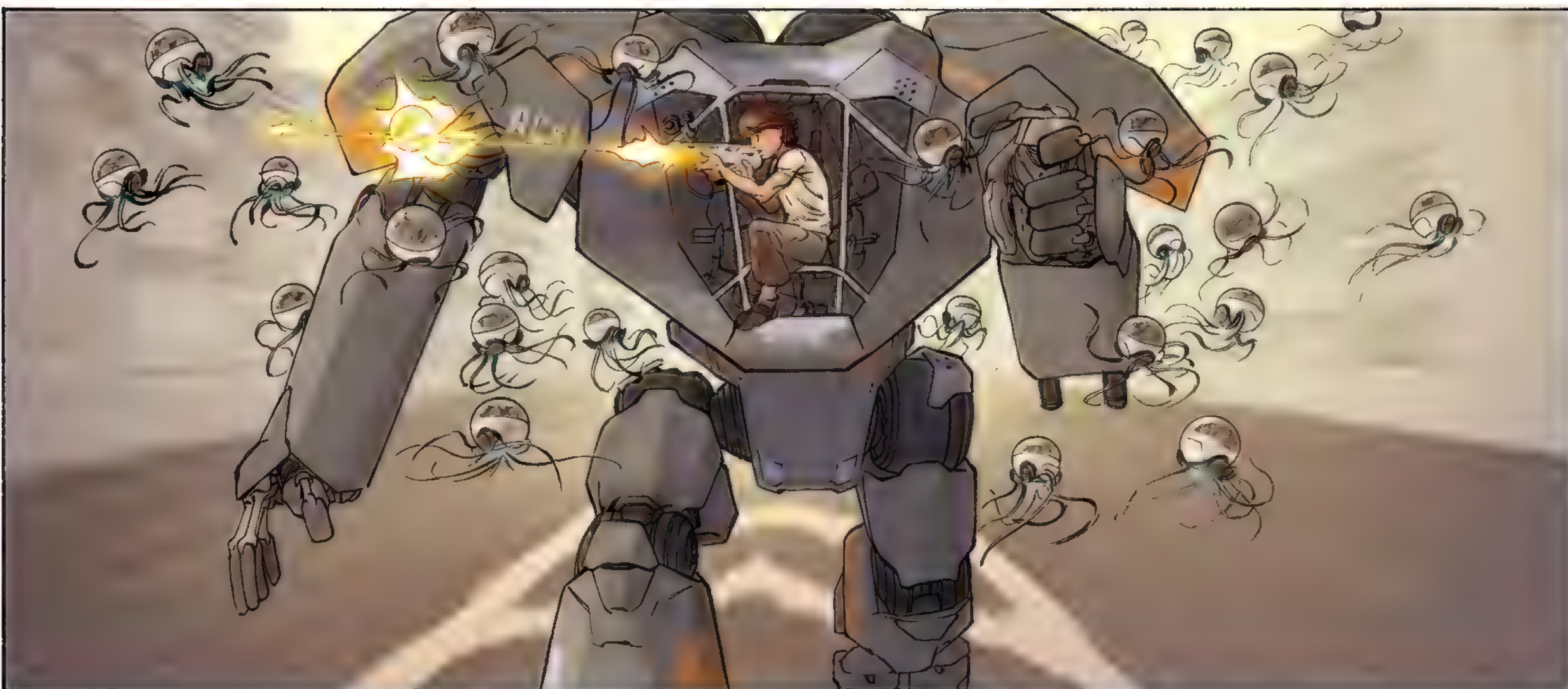
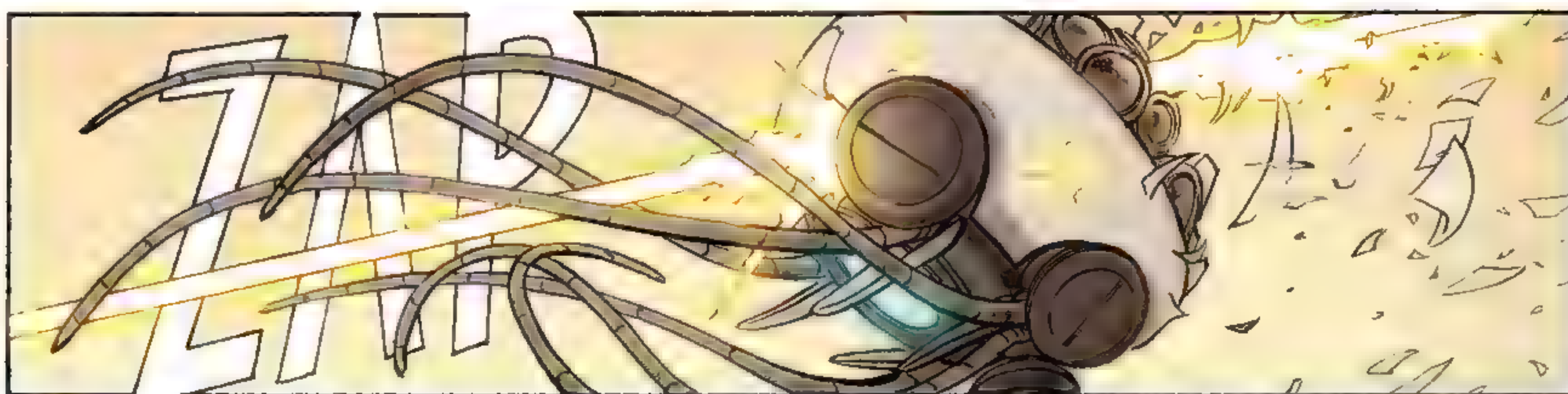
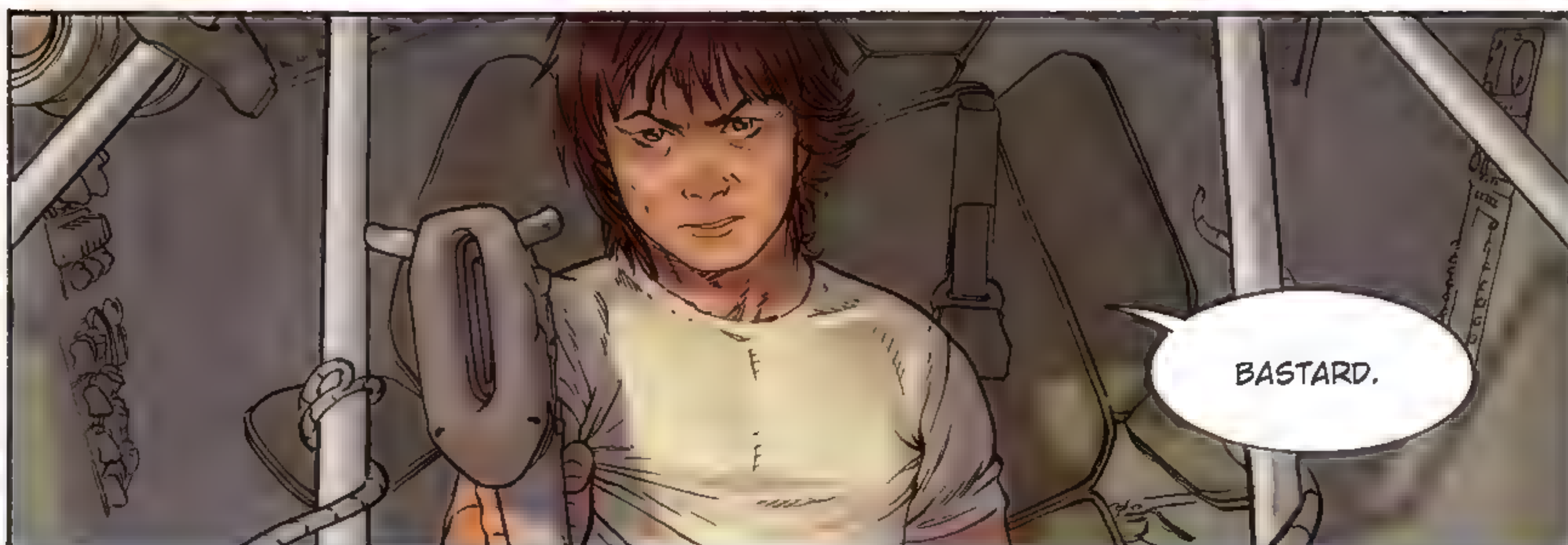
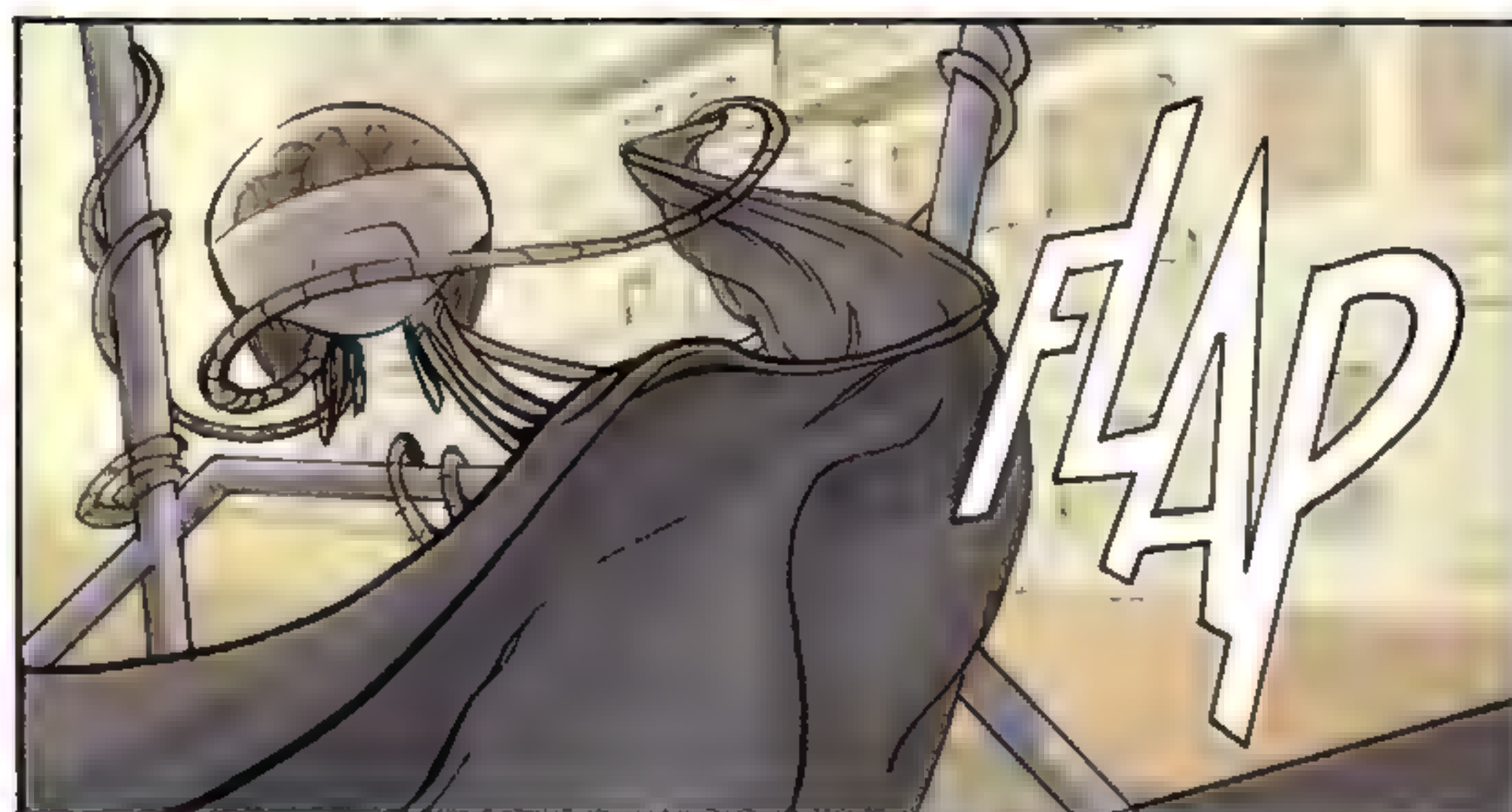
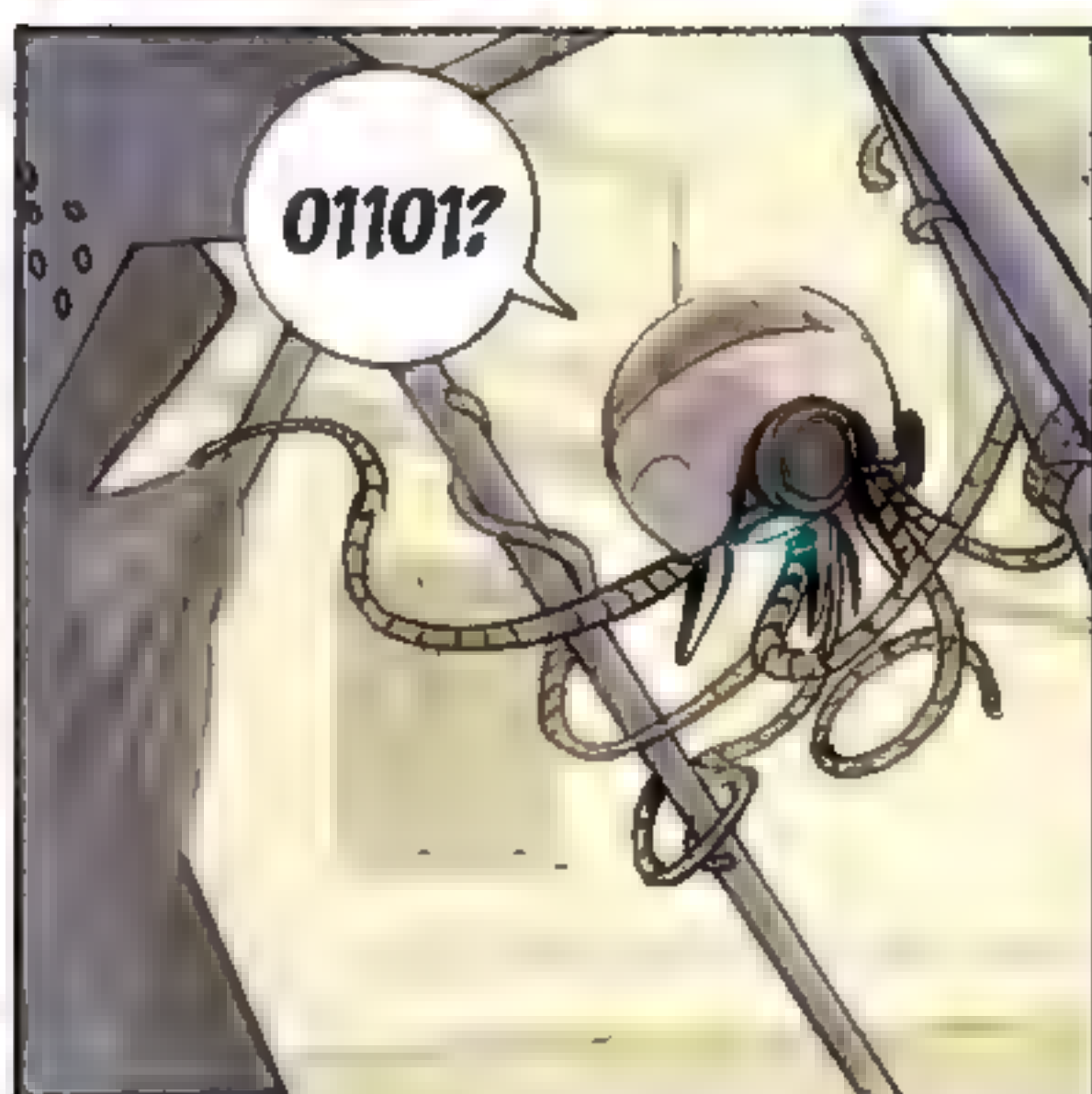
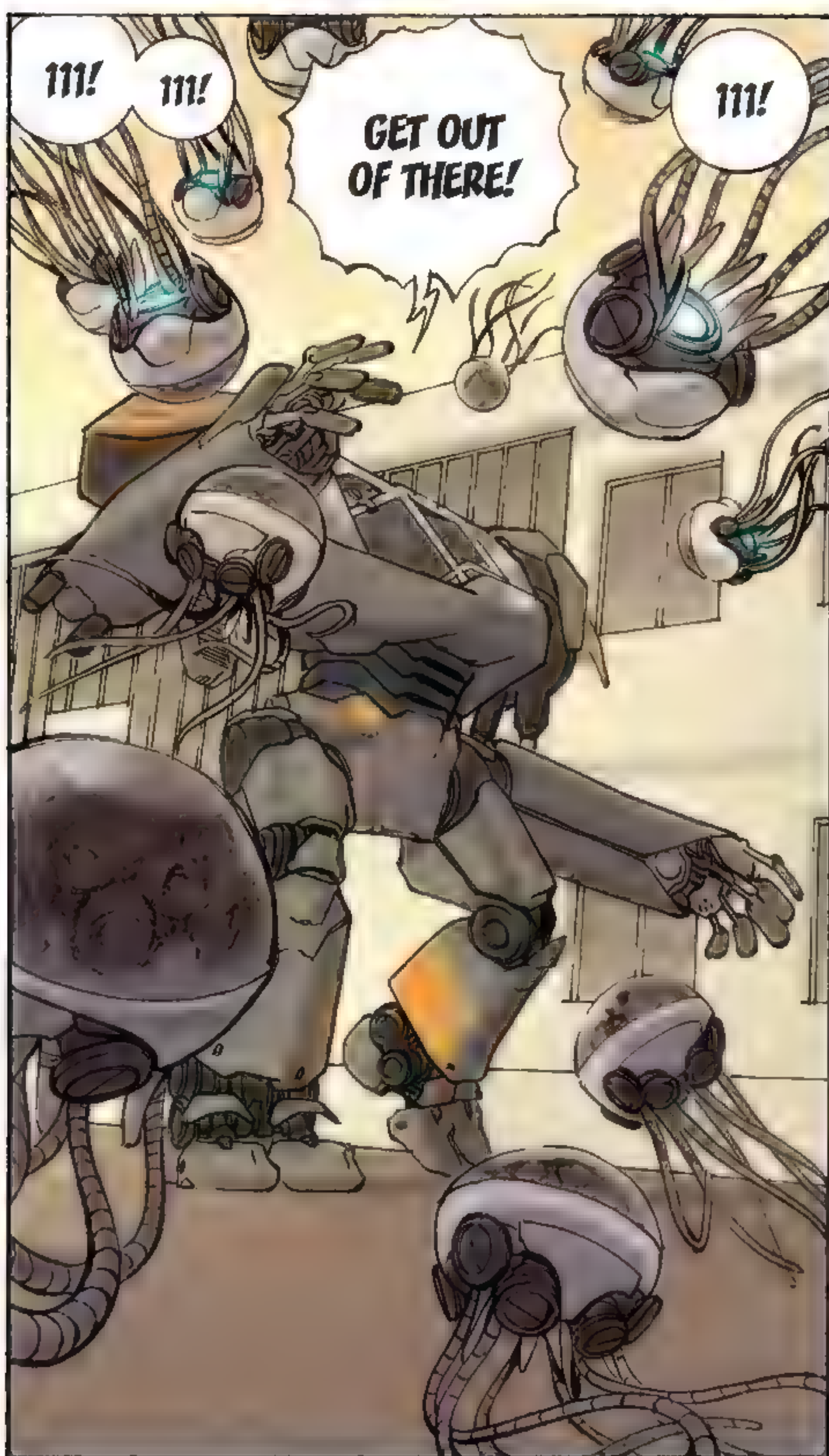
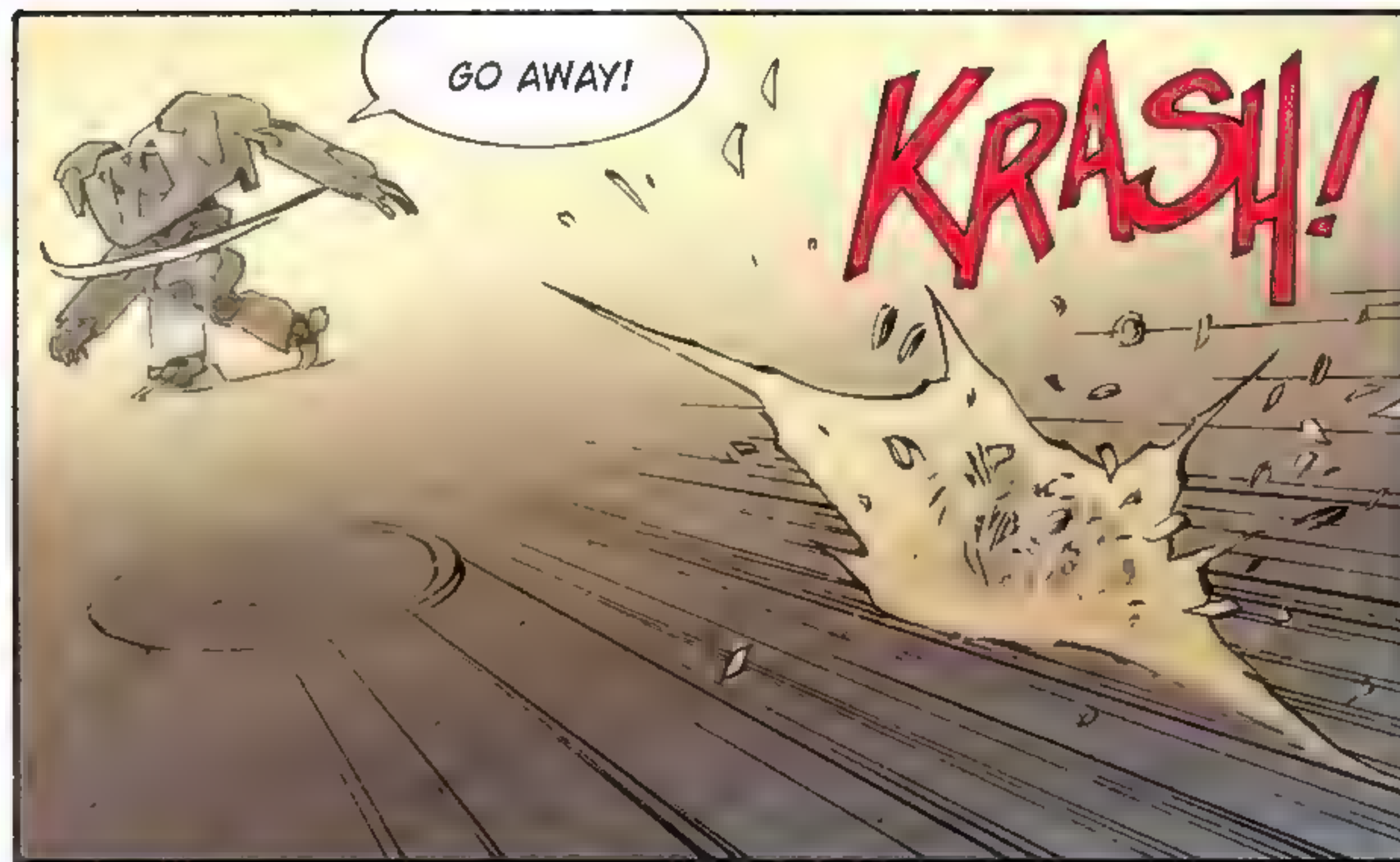
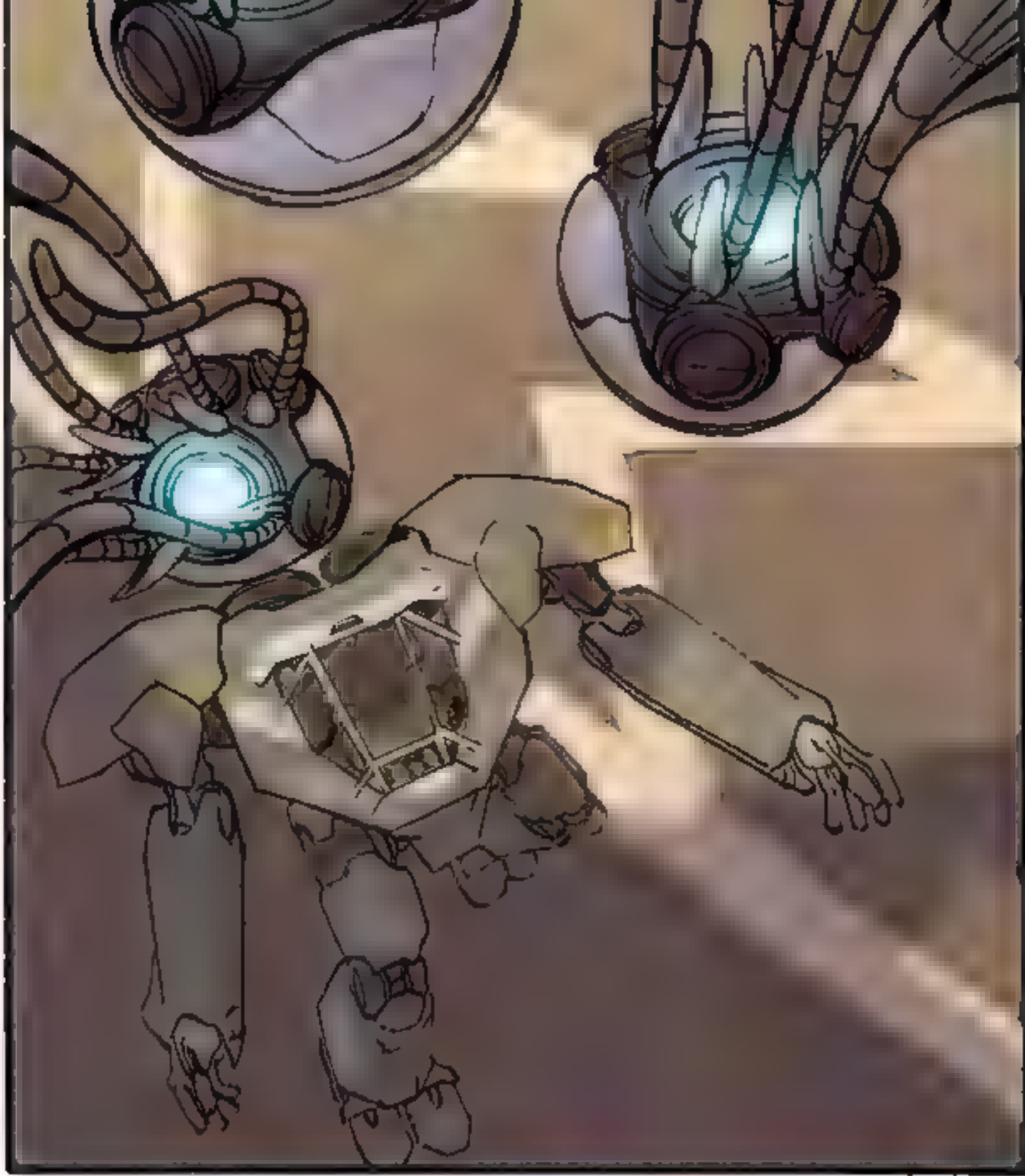
WAIT...

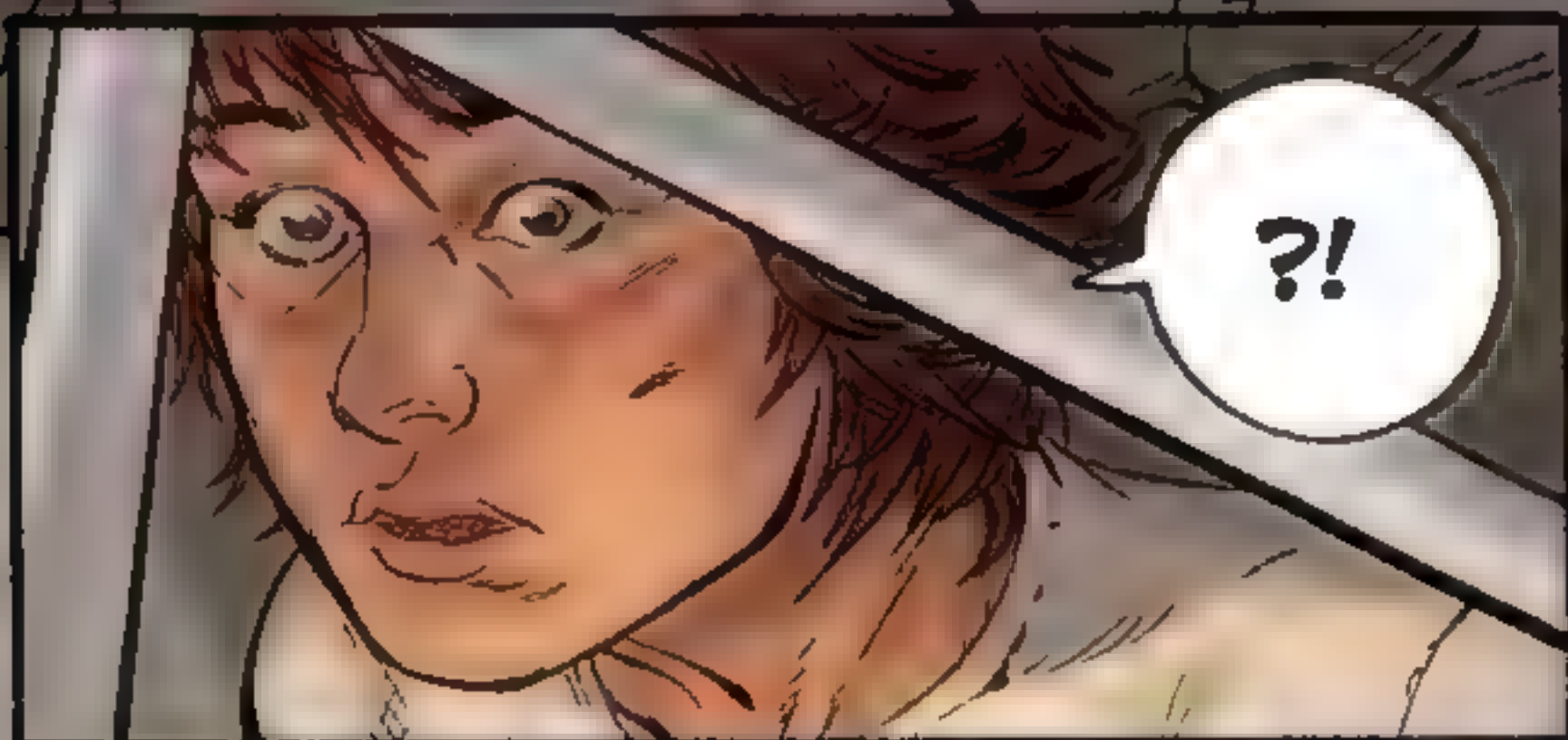
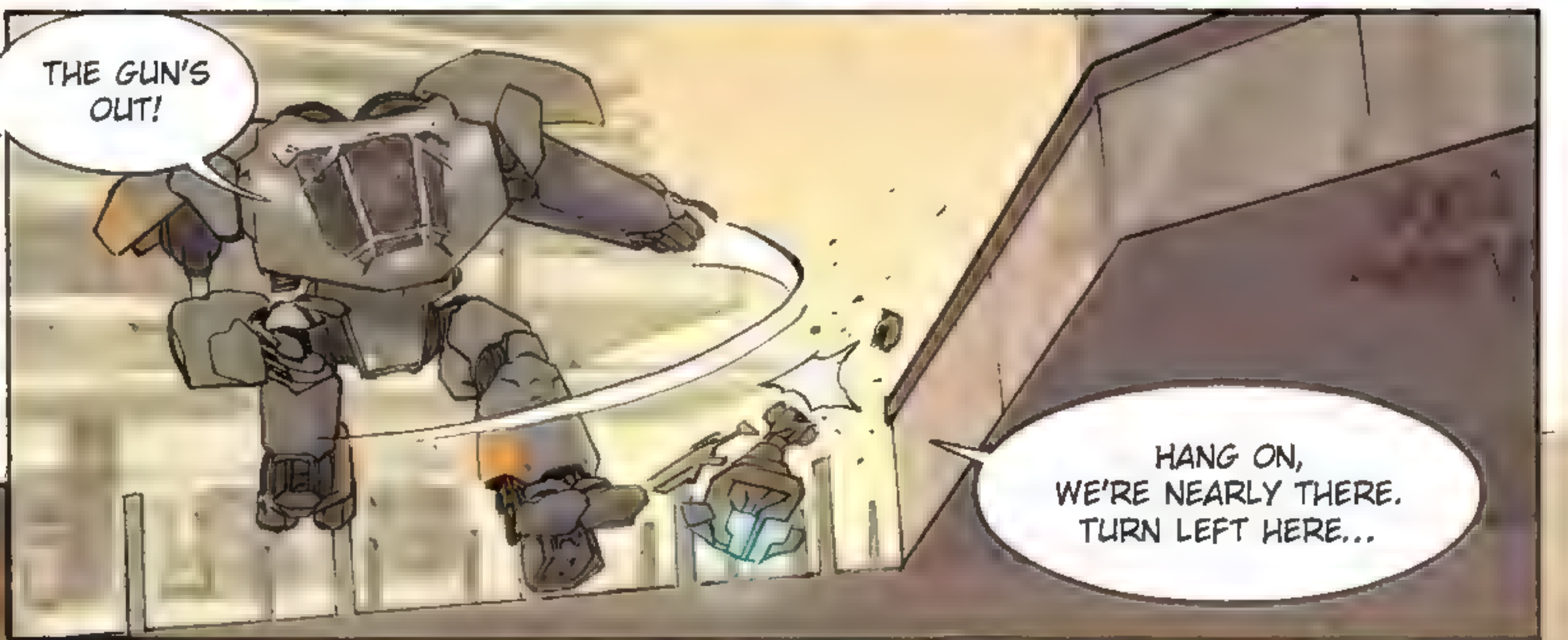
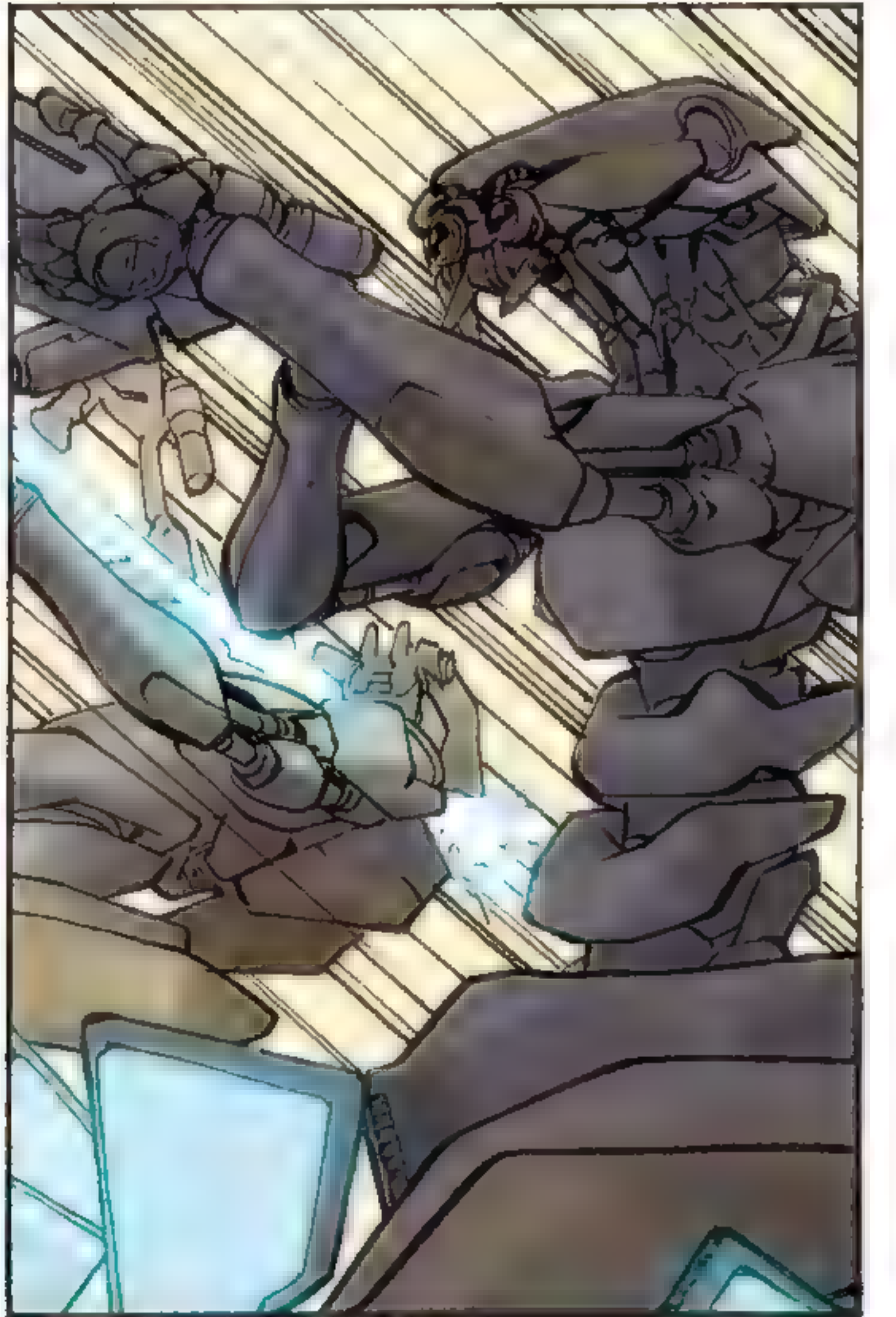
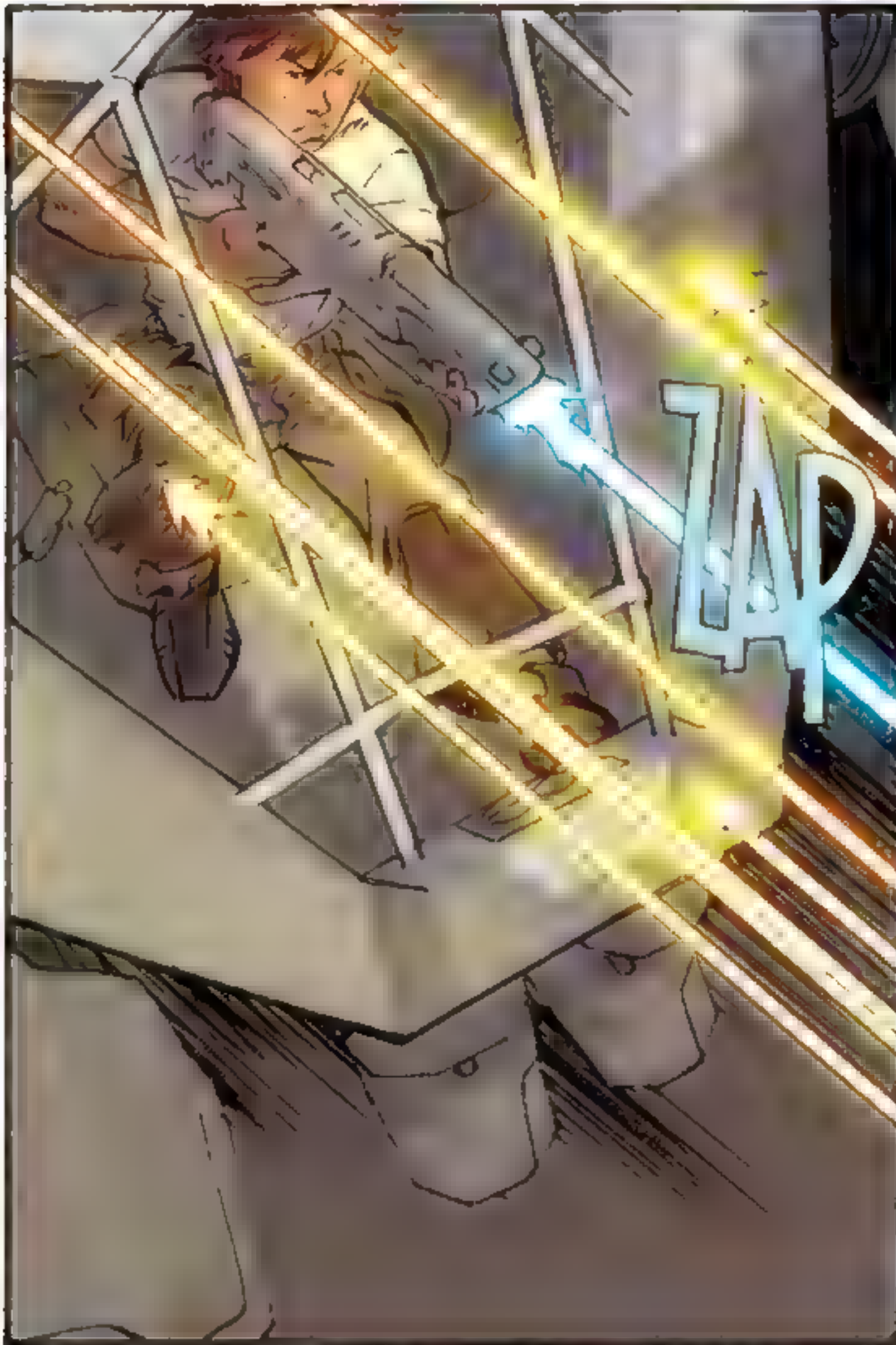
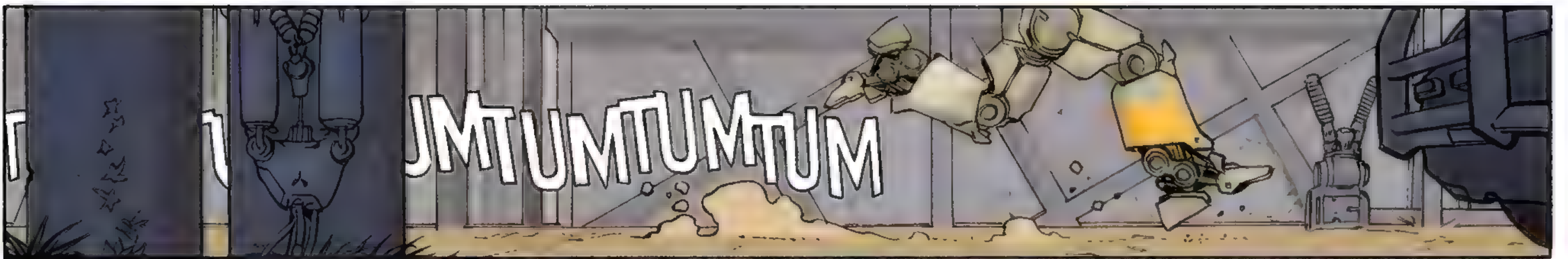


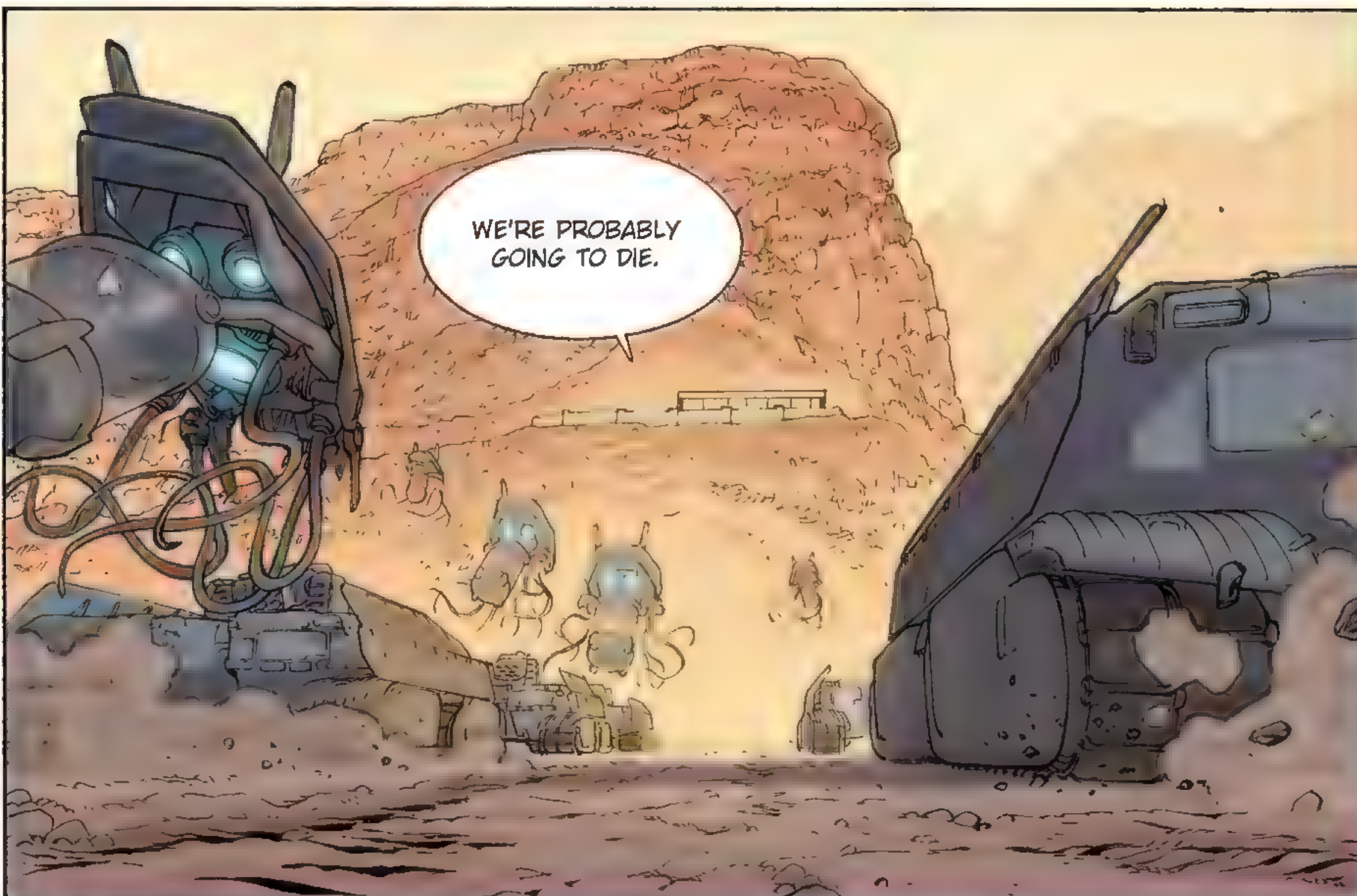
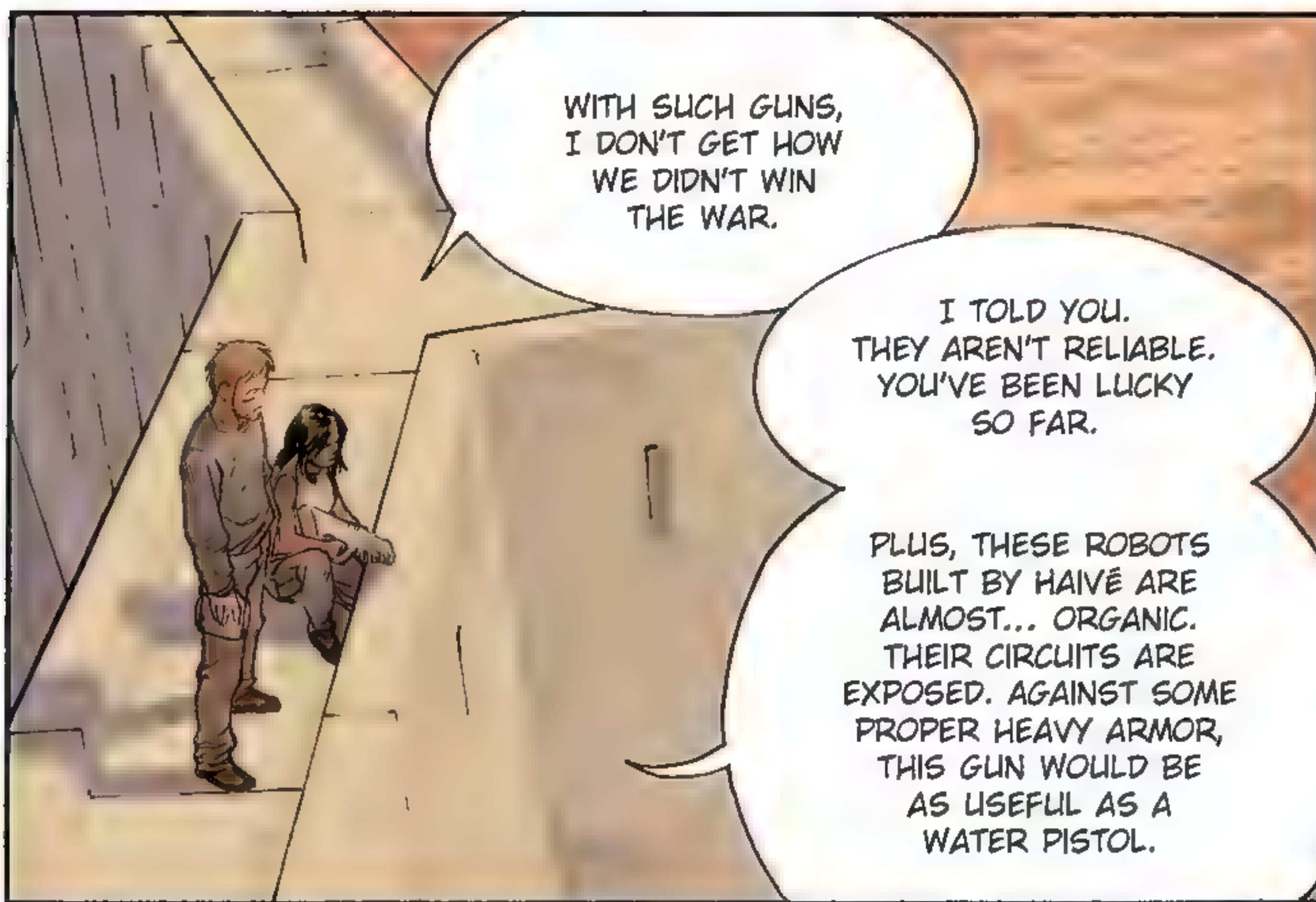
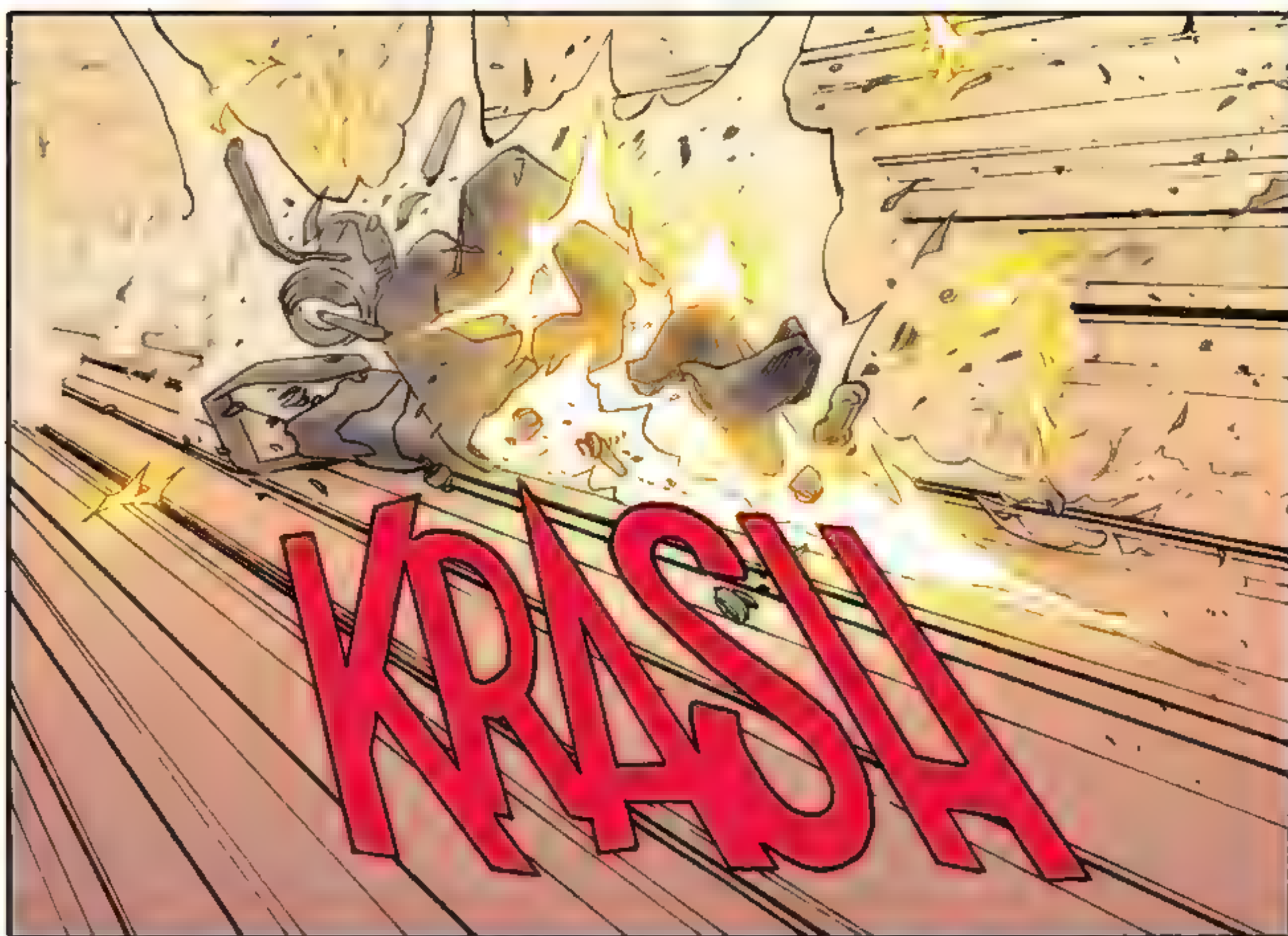
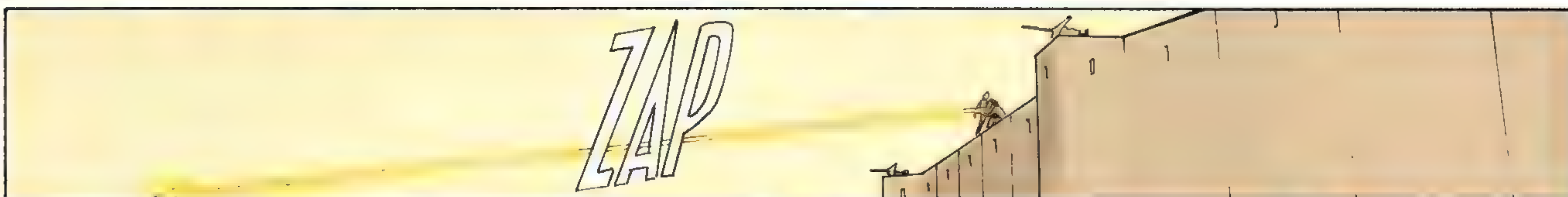
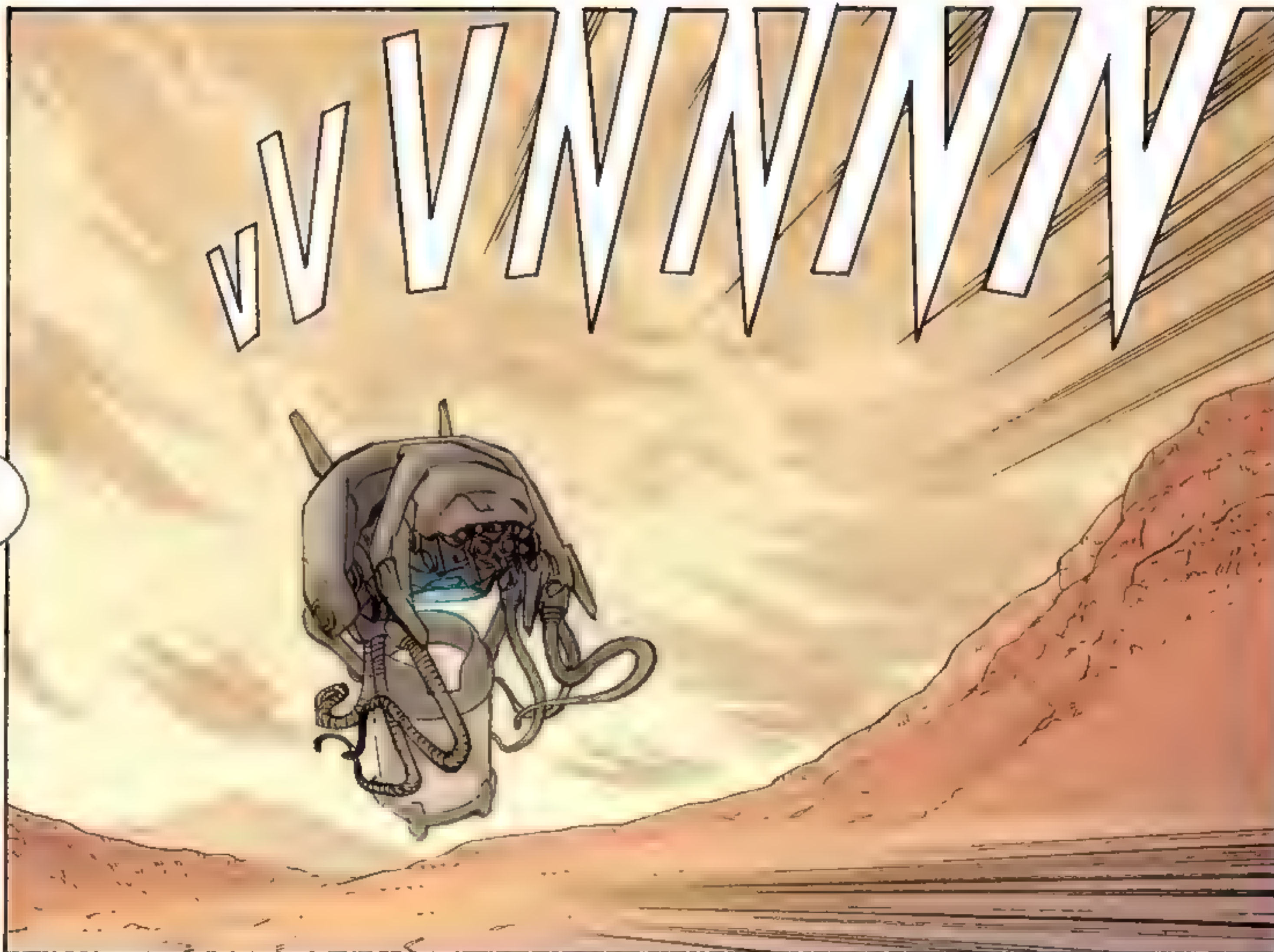
STAN!
MILITARY
VEHICLES!
THEY'RE
HEADED RIGHT
FOR YOU!

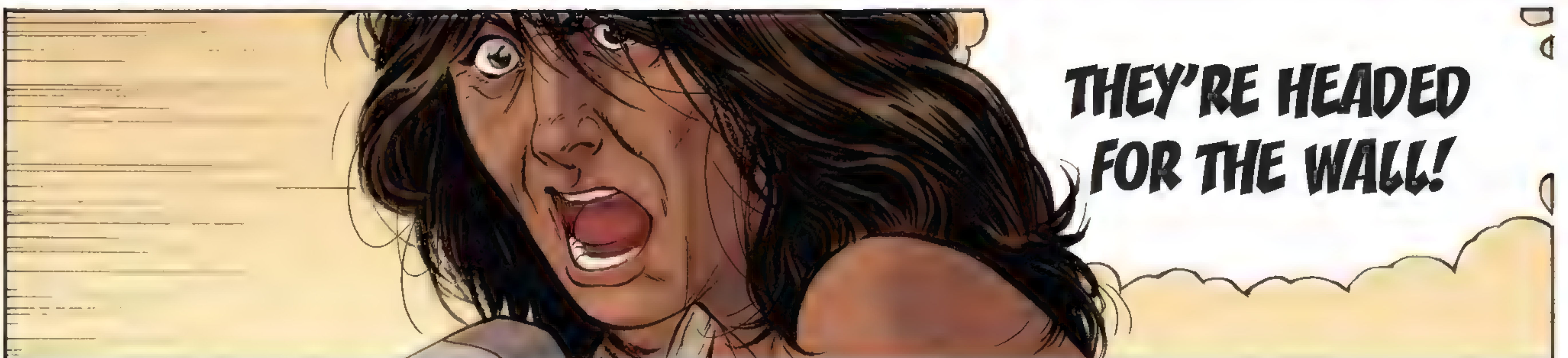
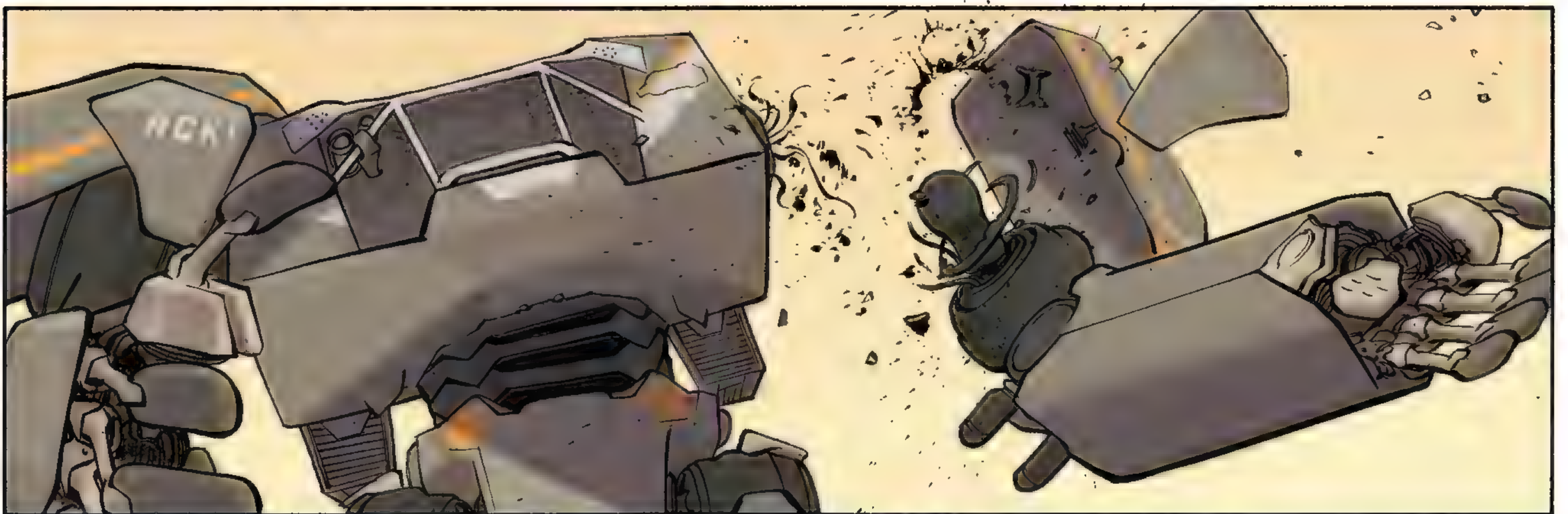
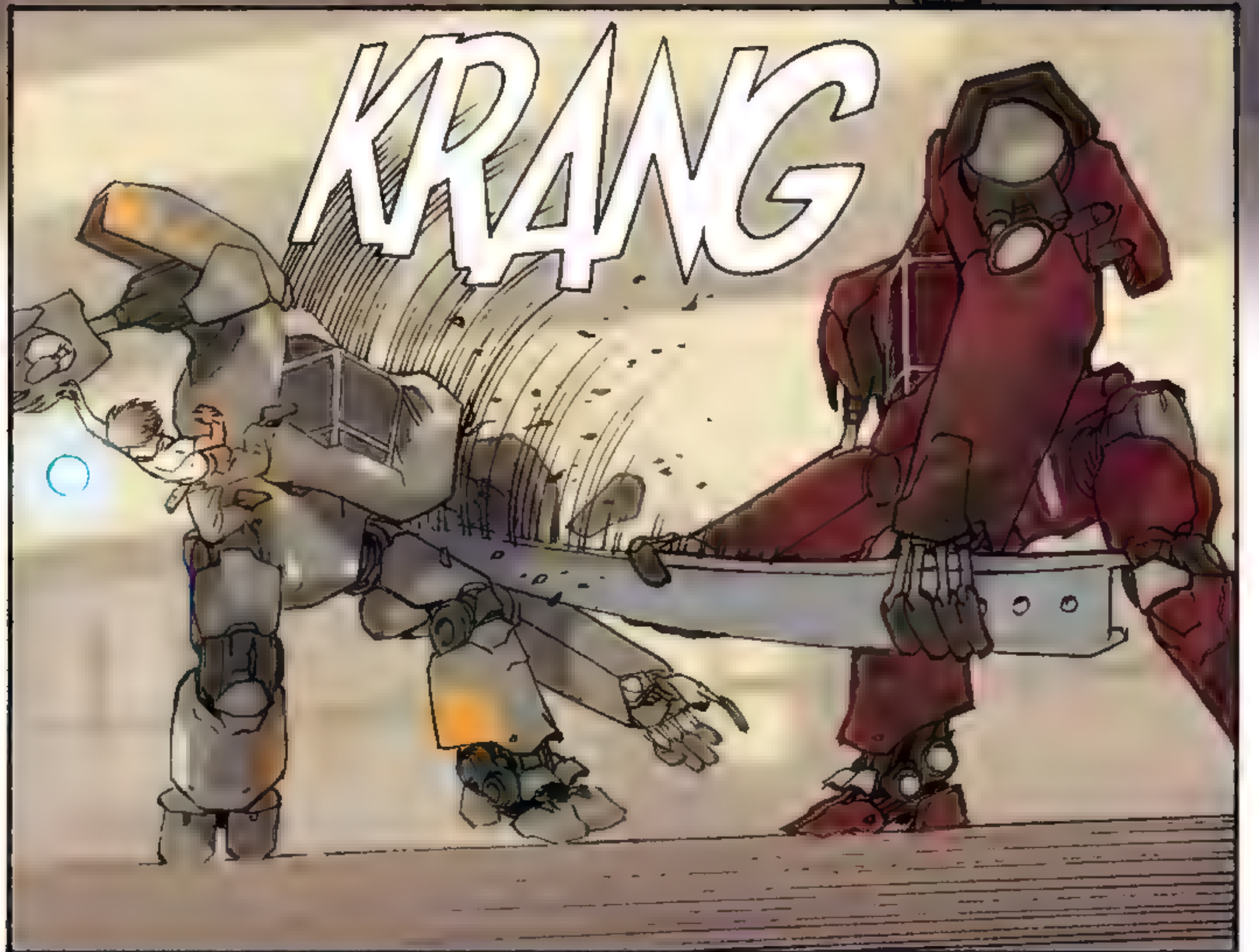
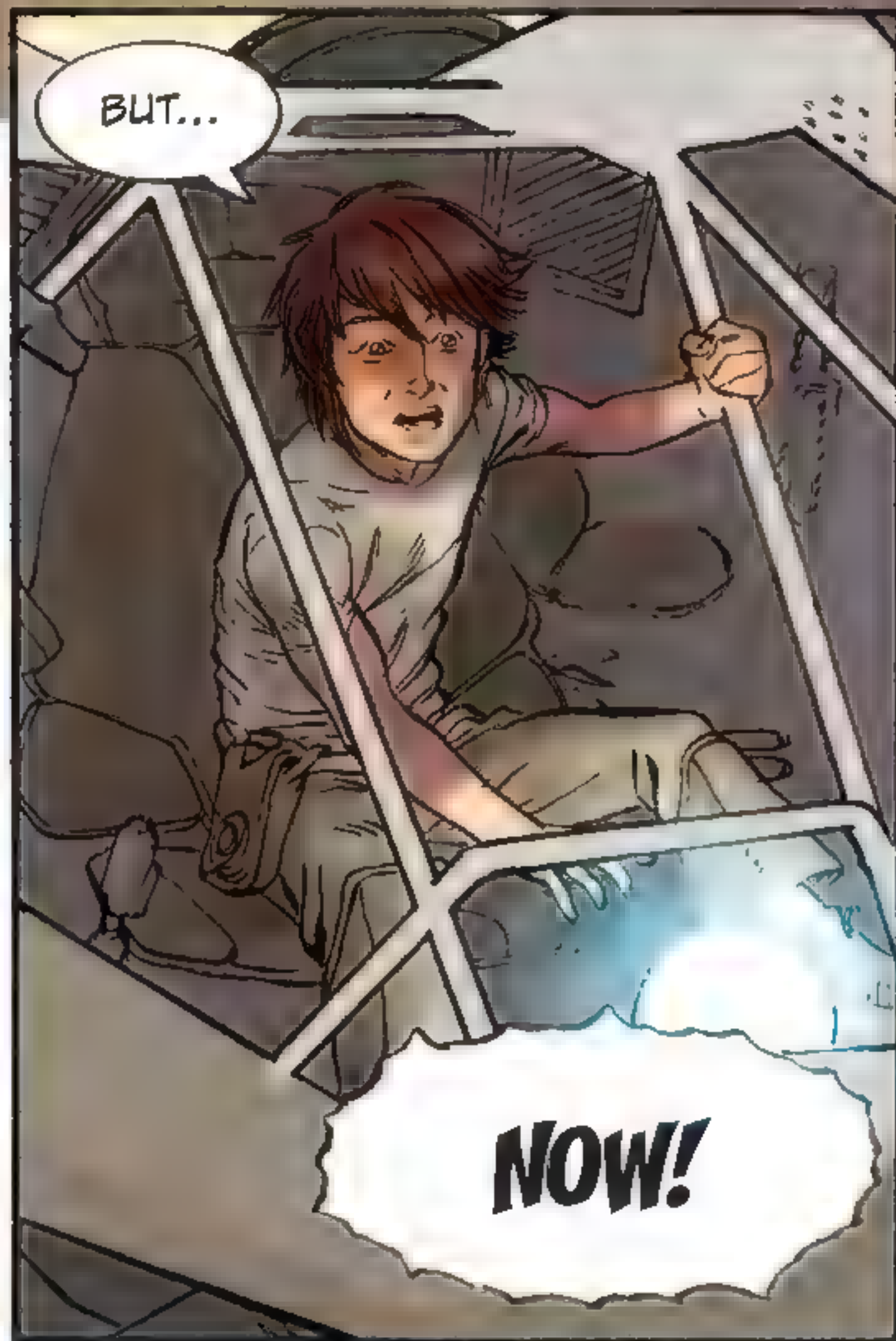
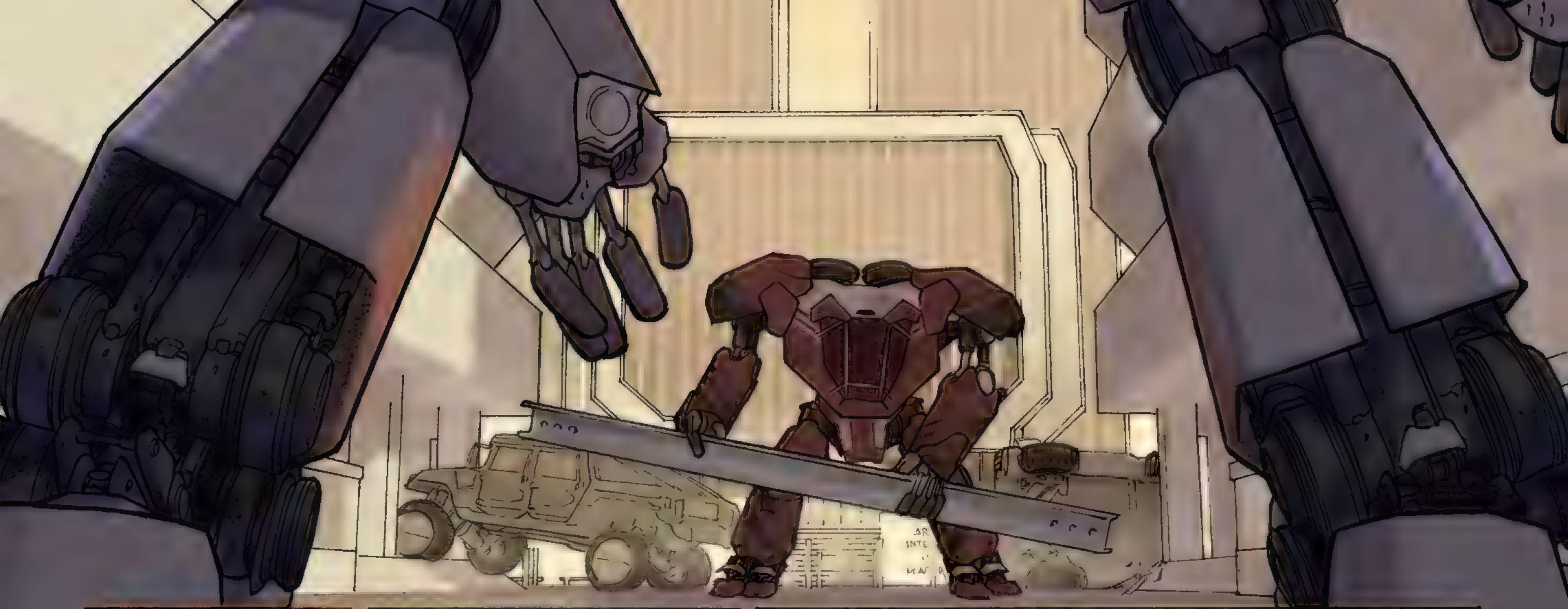


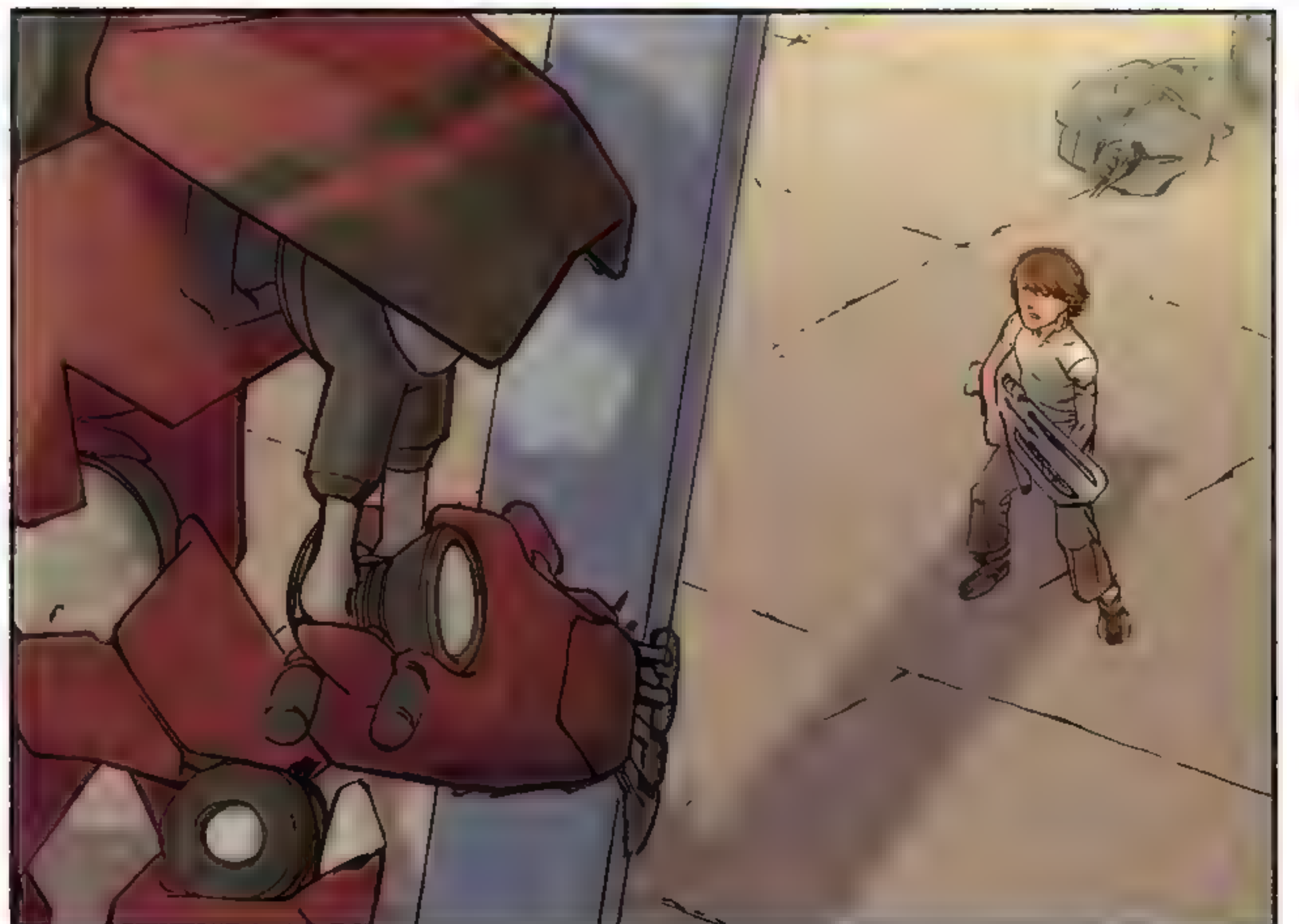
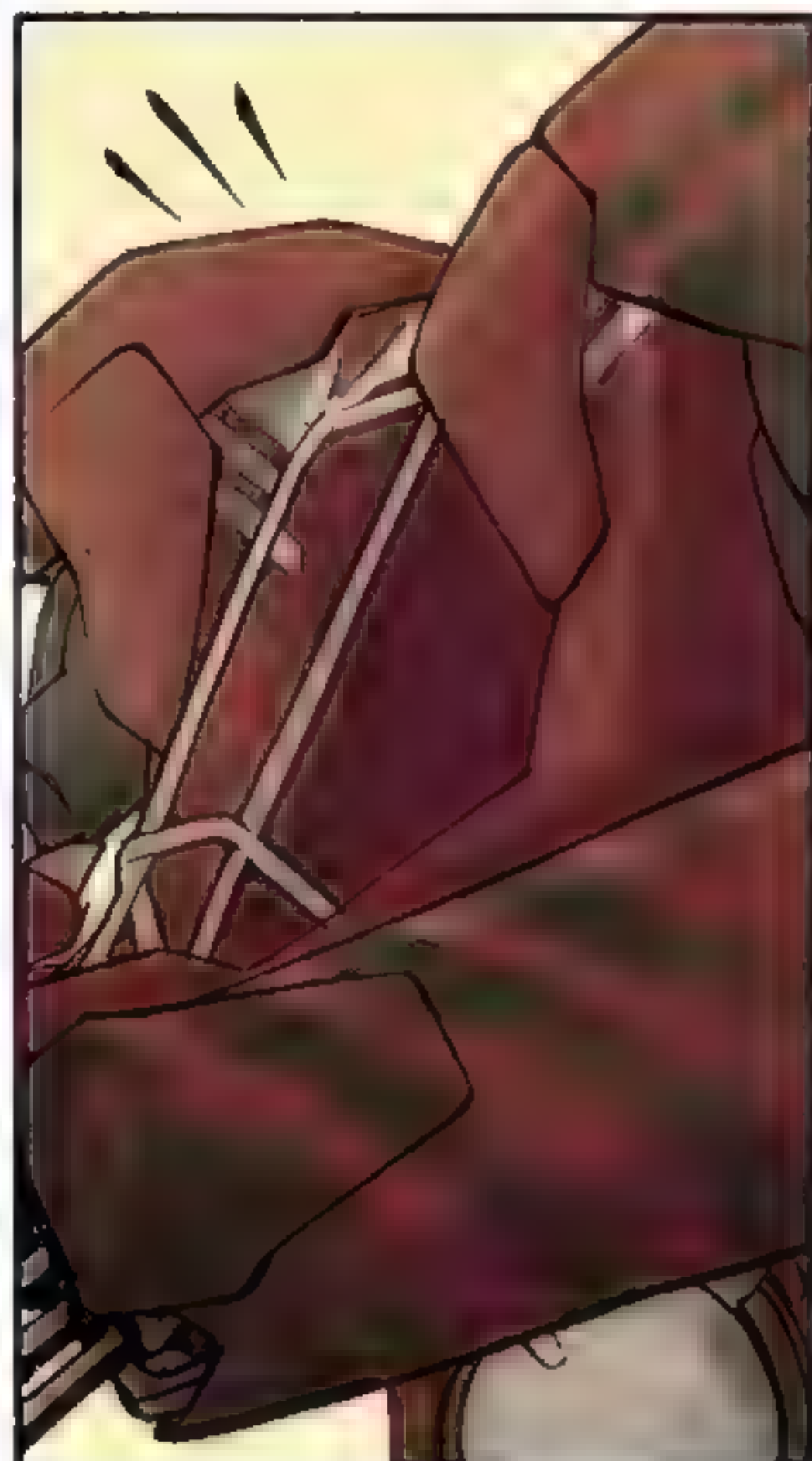
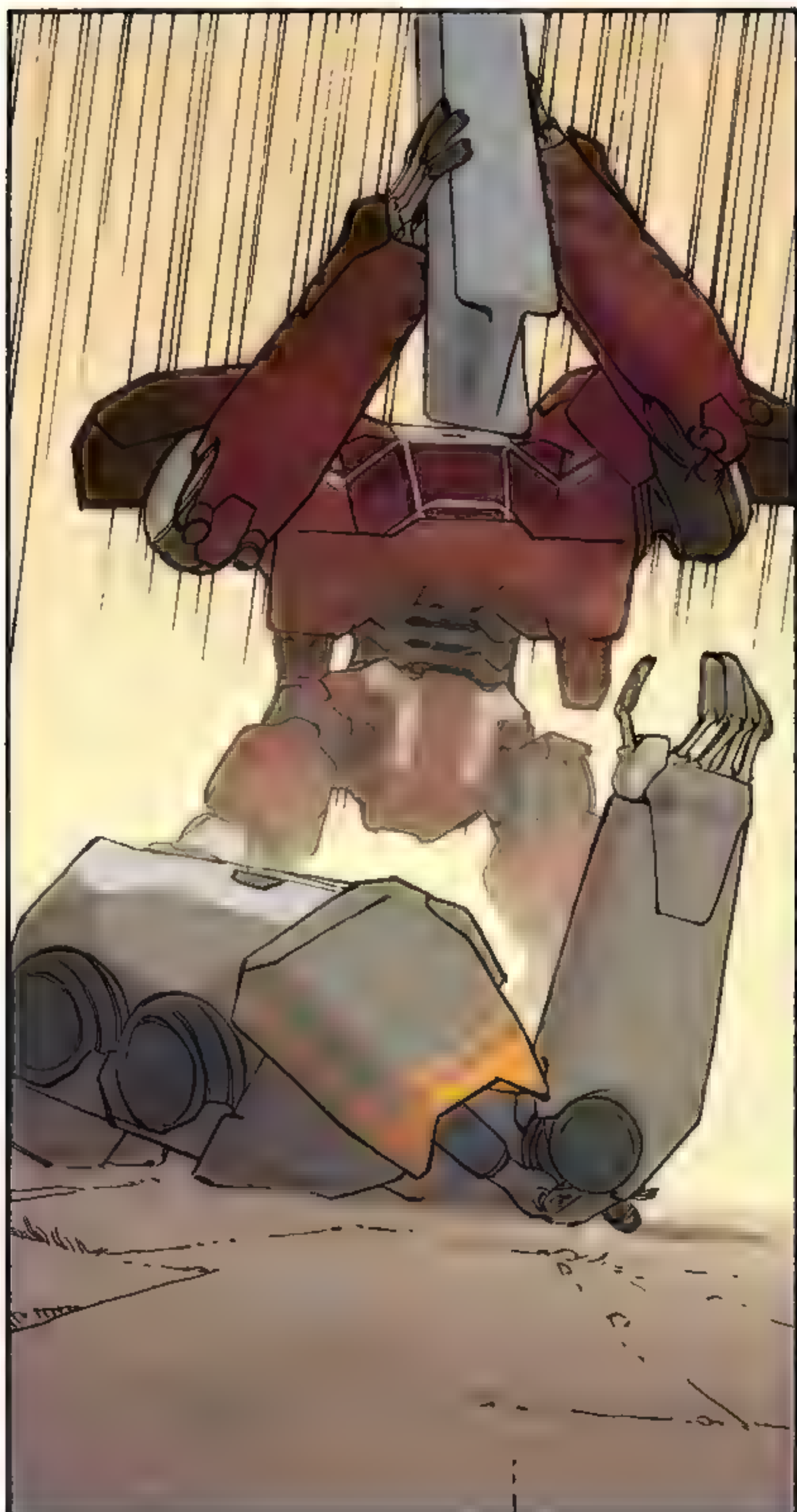
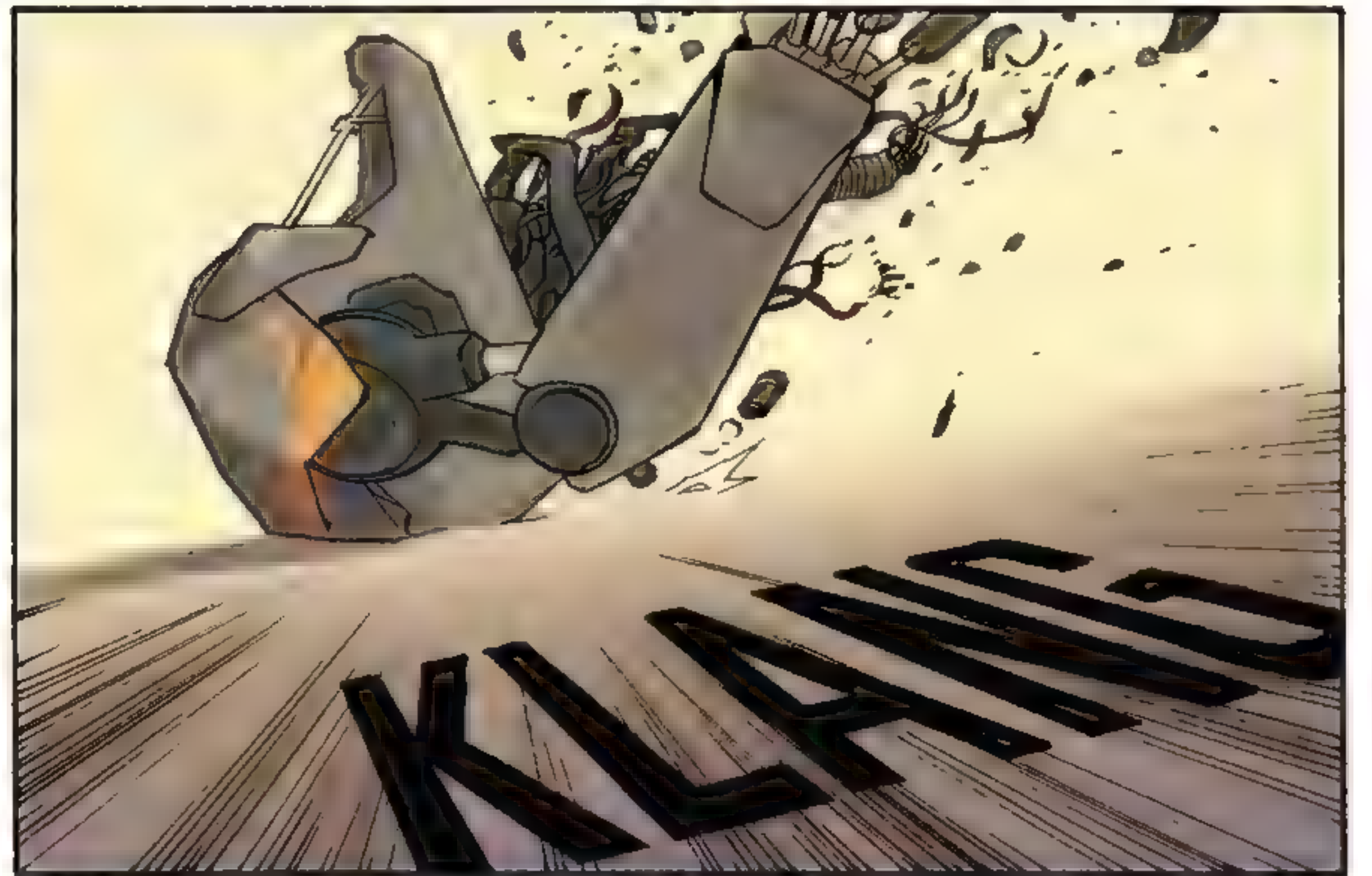
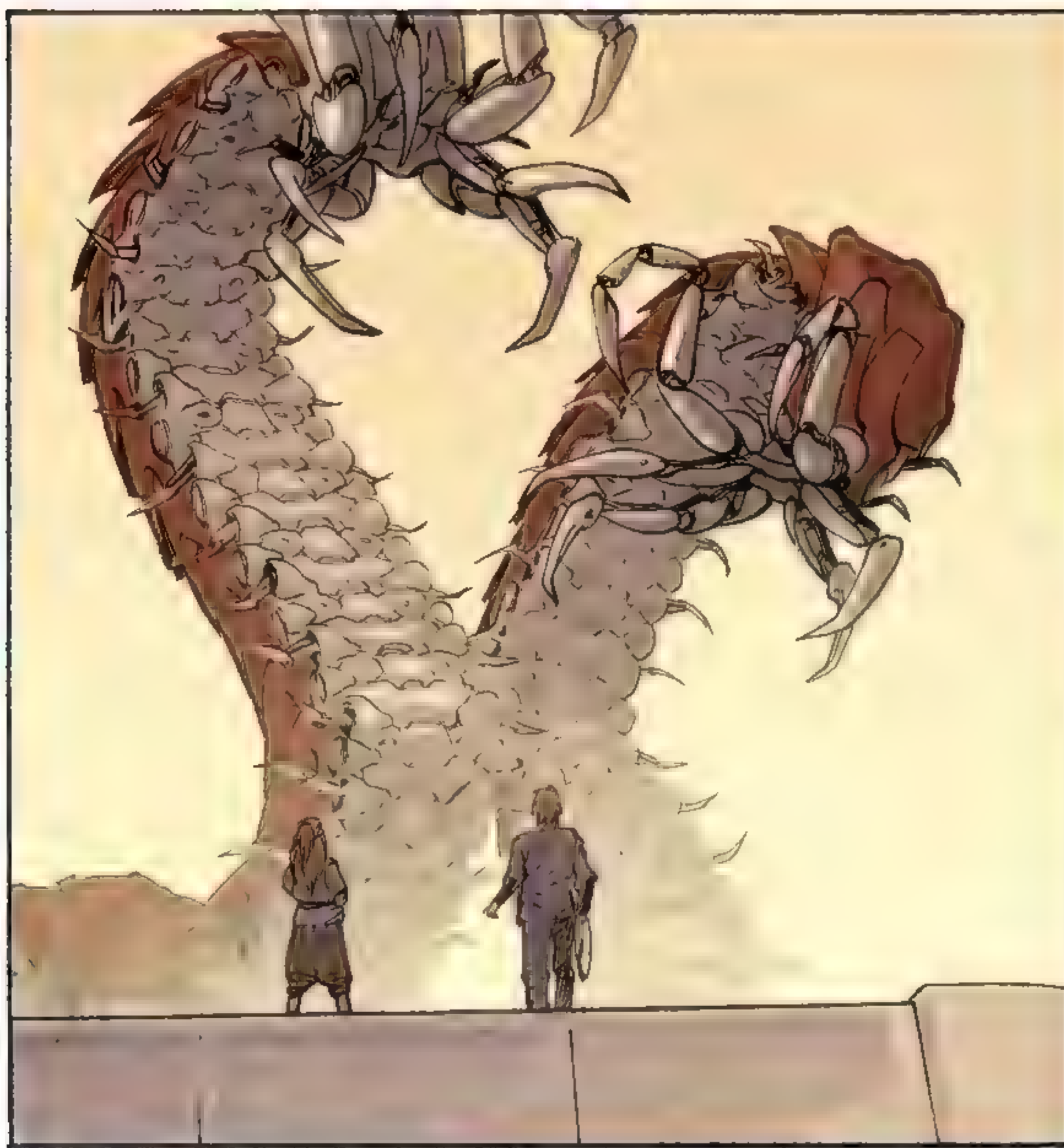
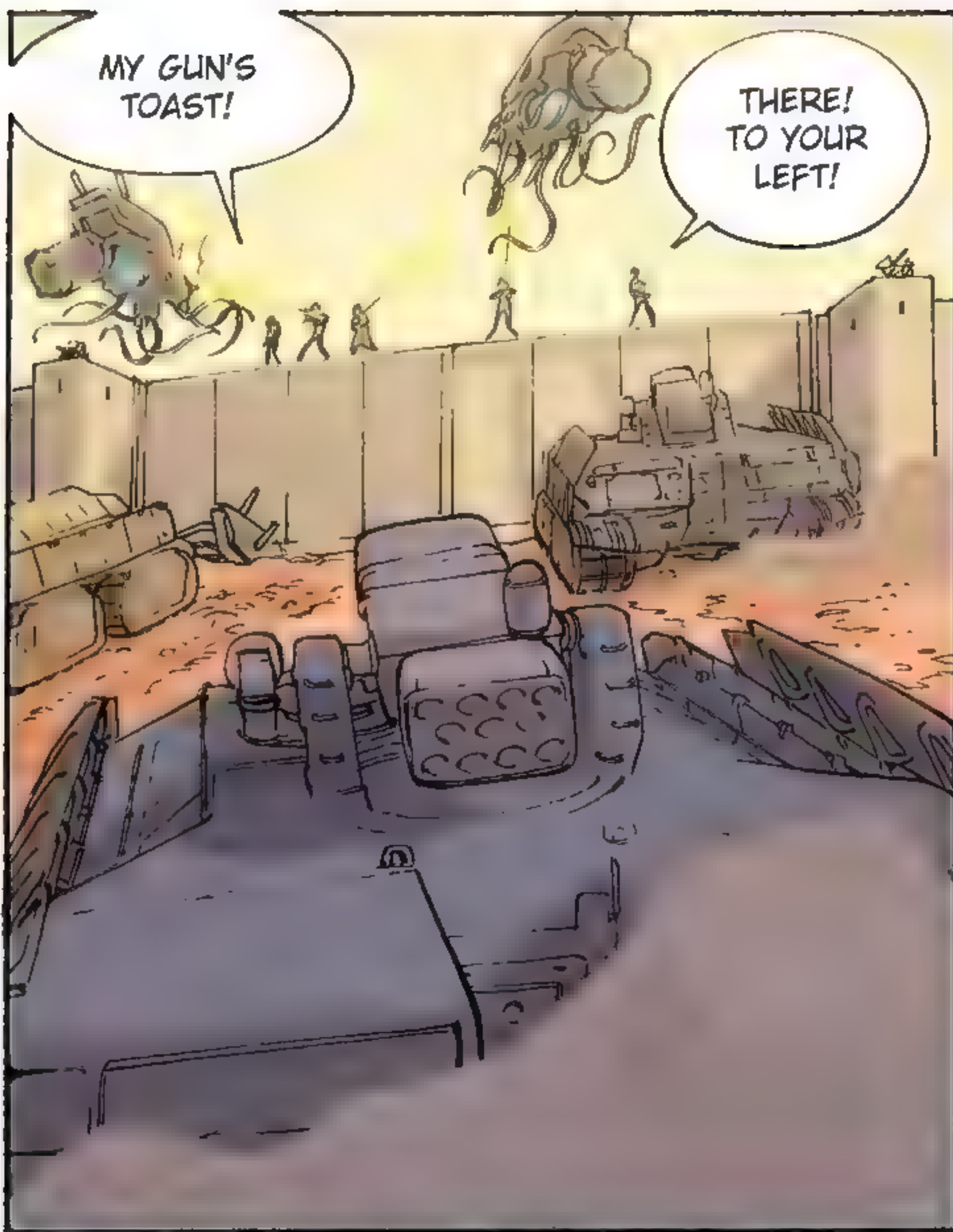


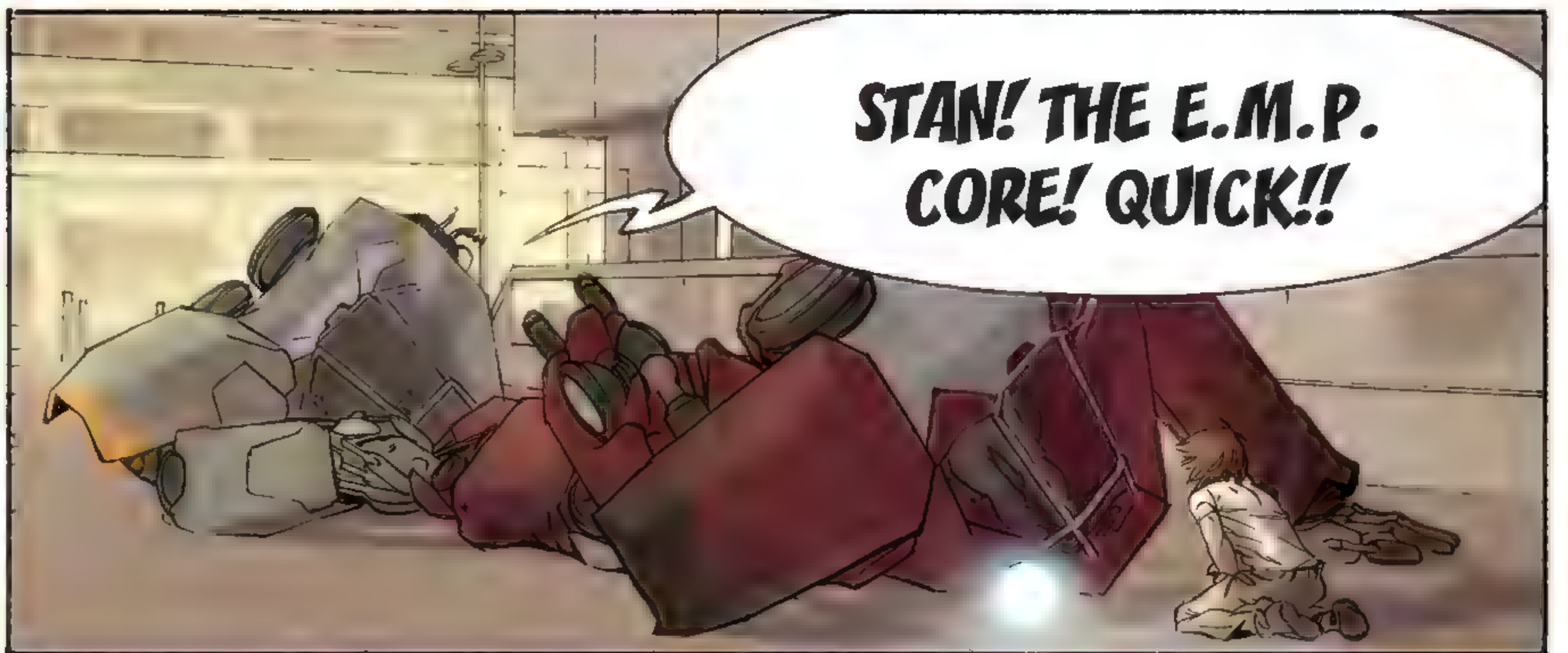
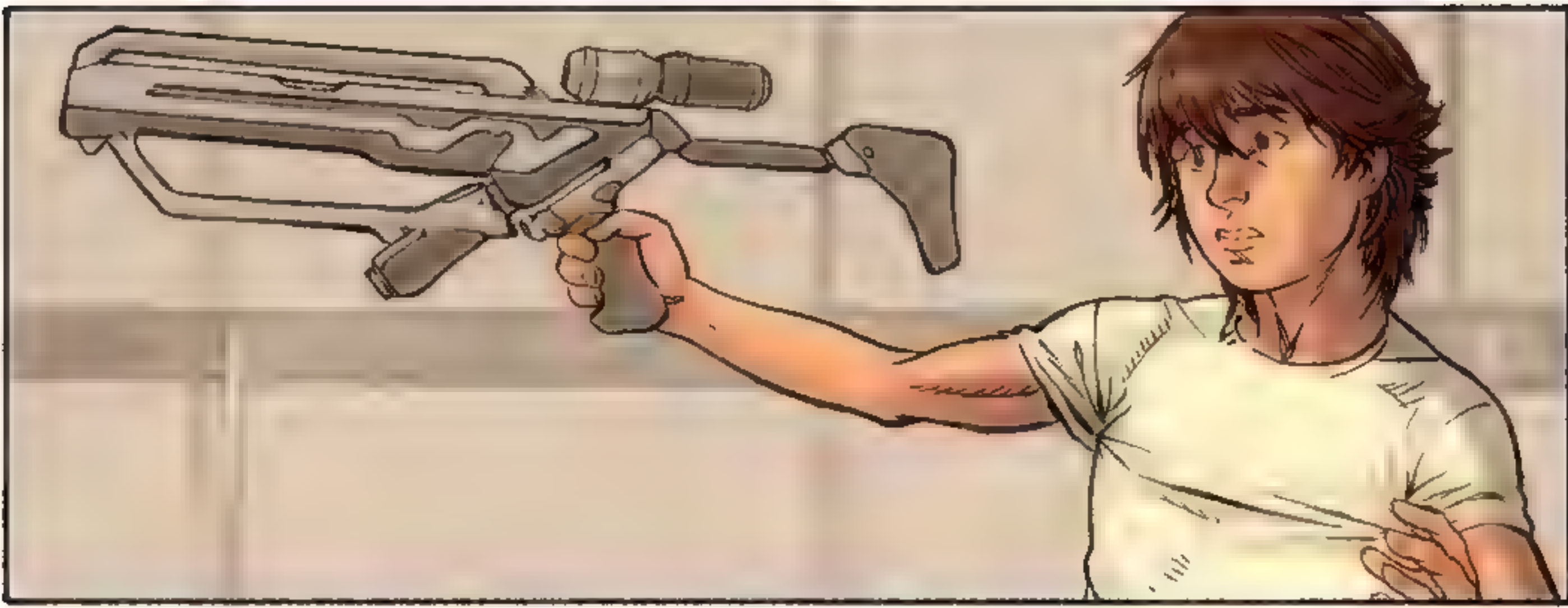


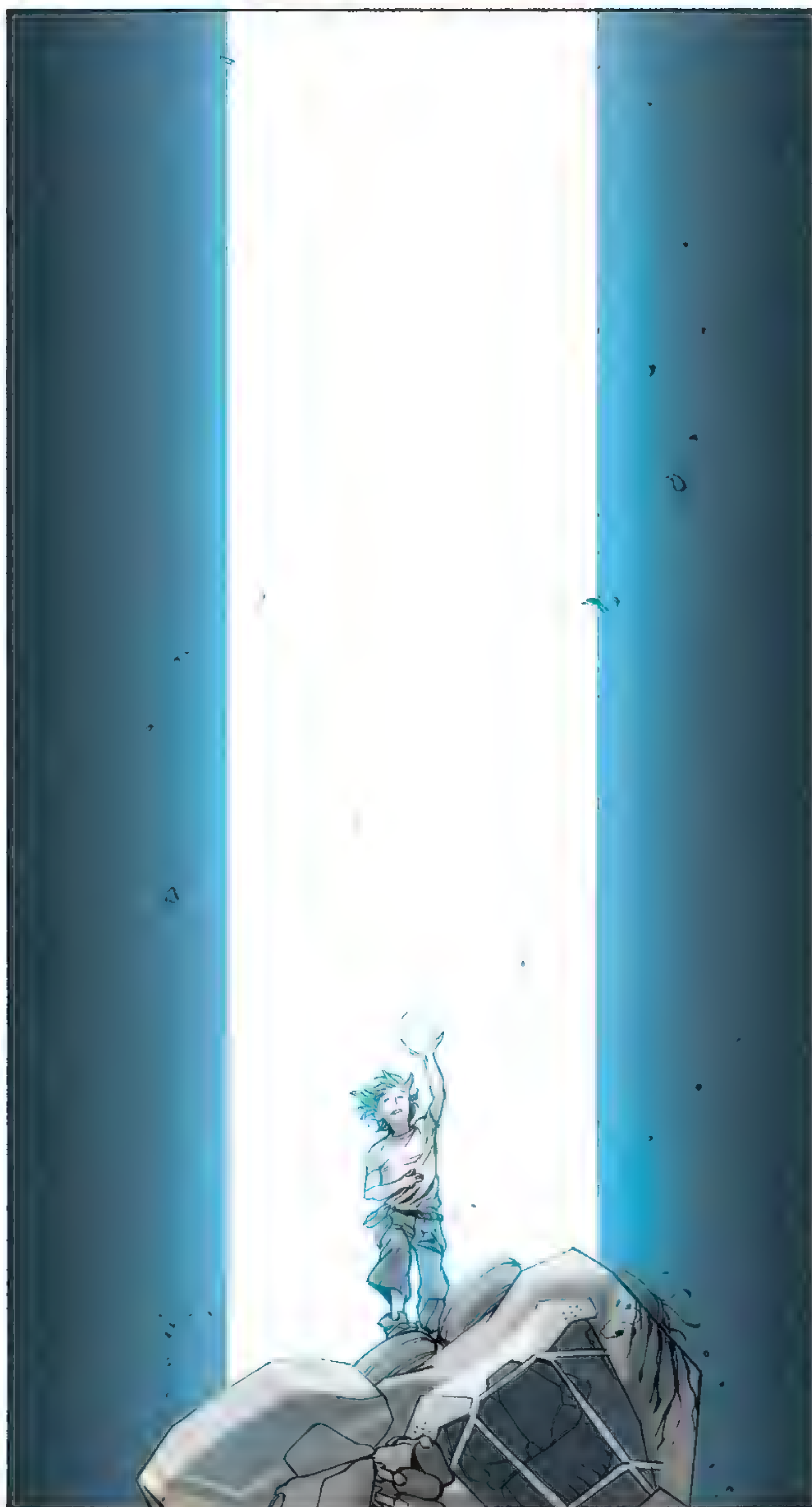


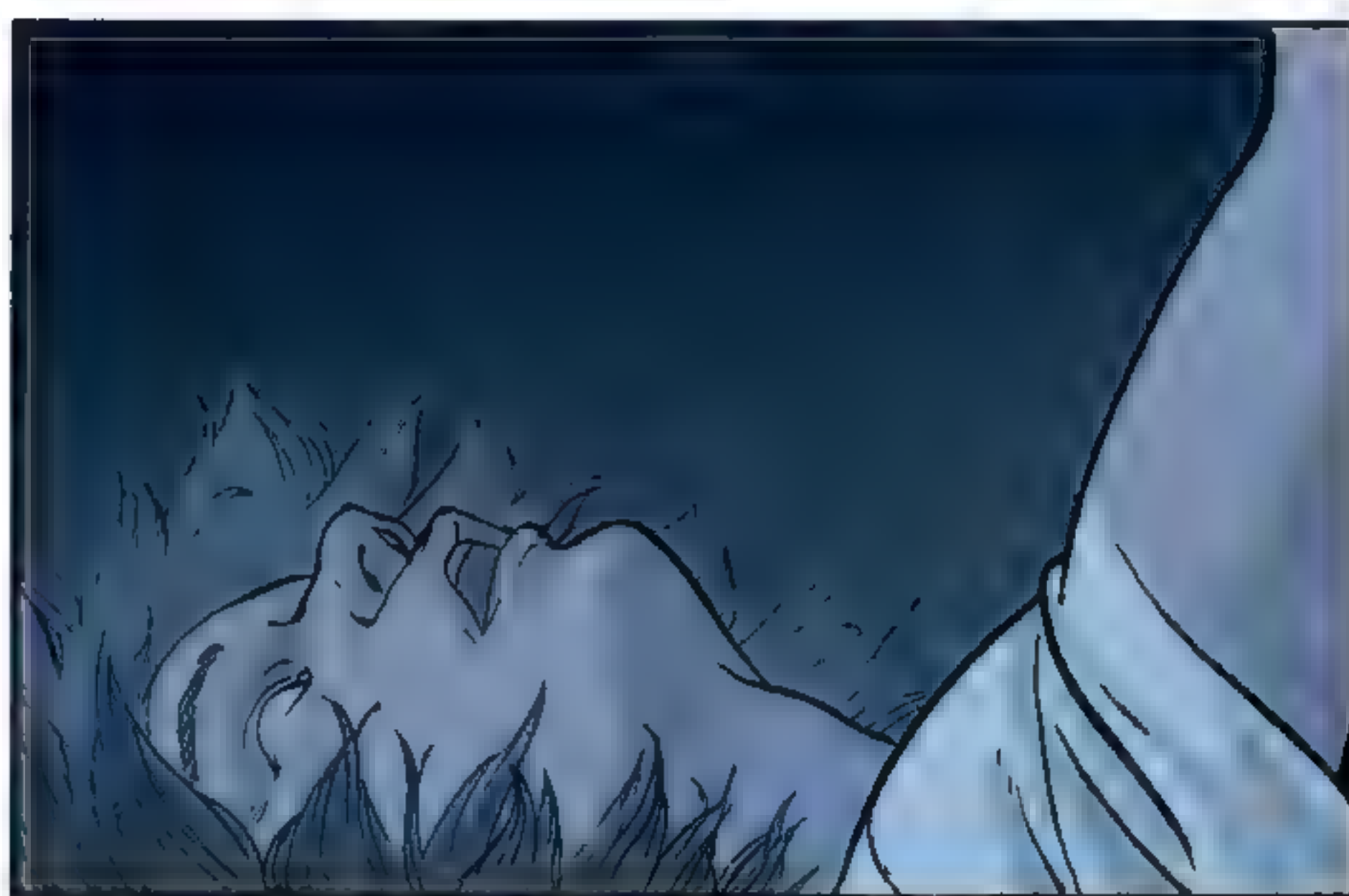
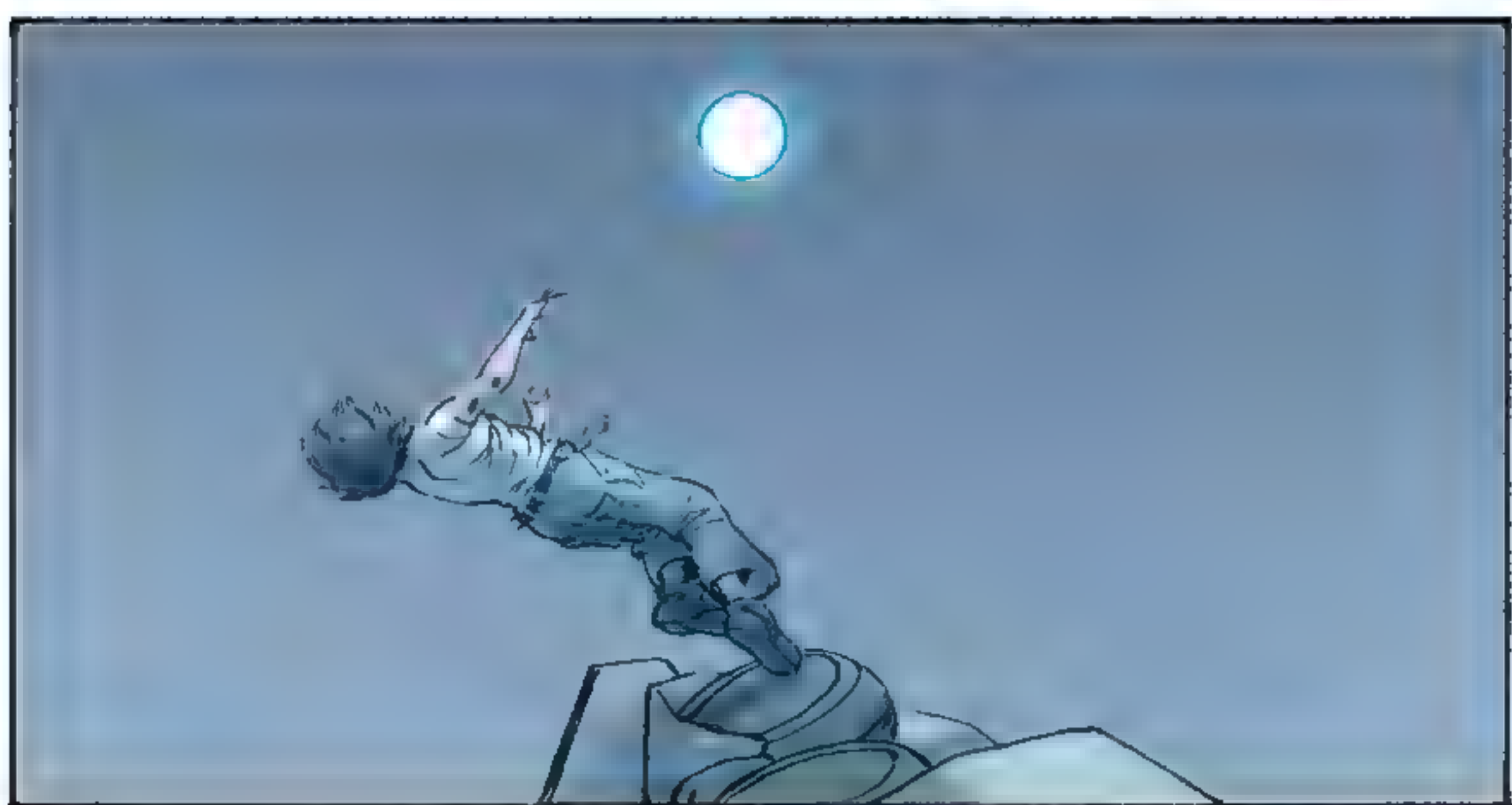
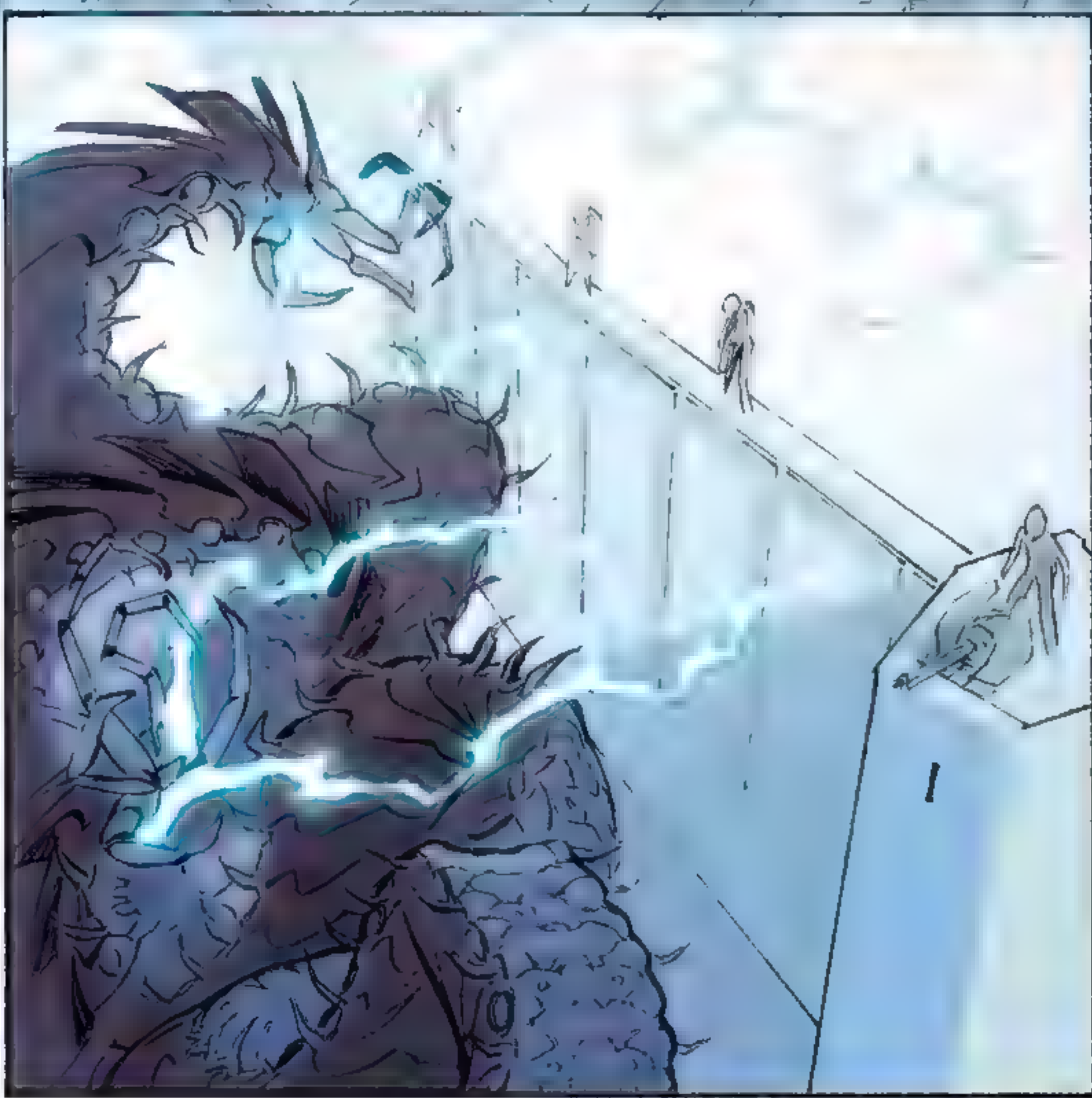


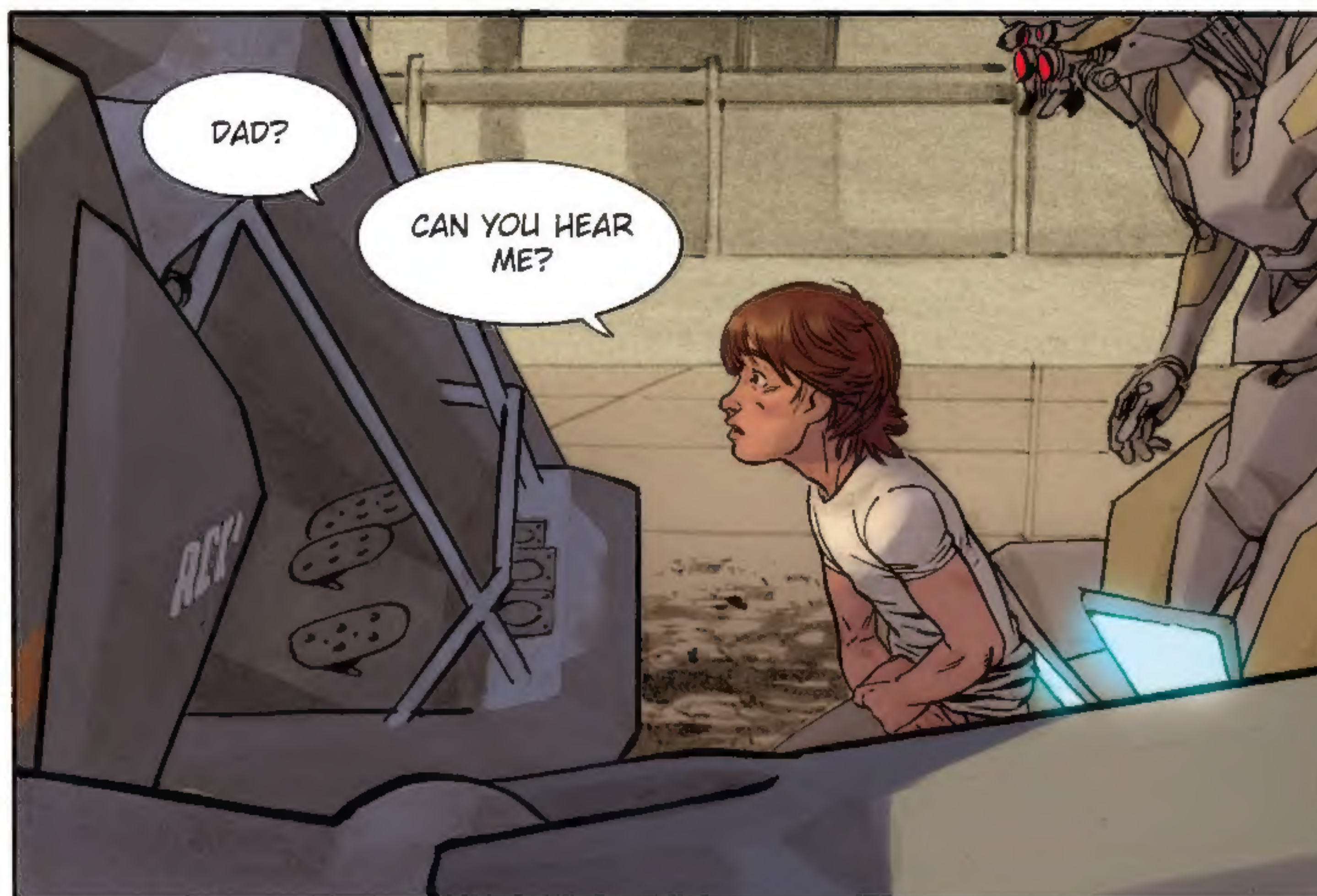
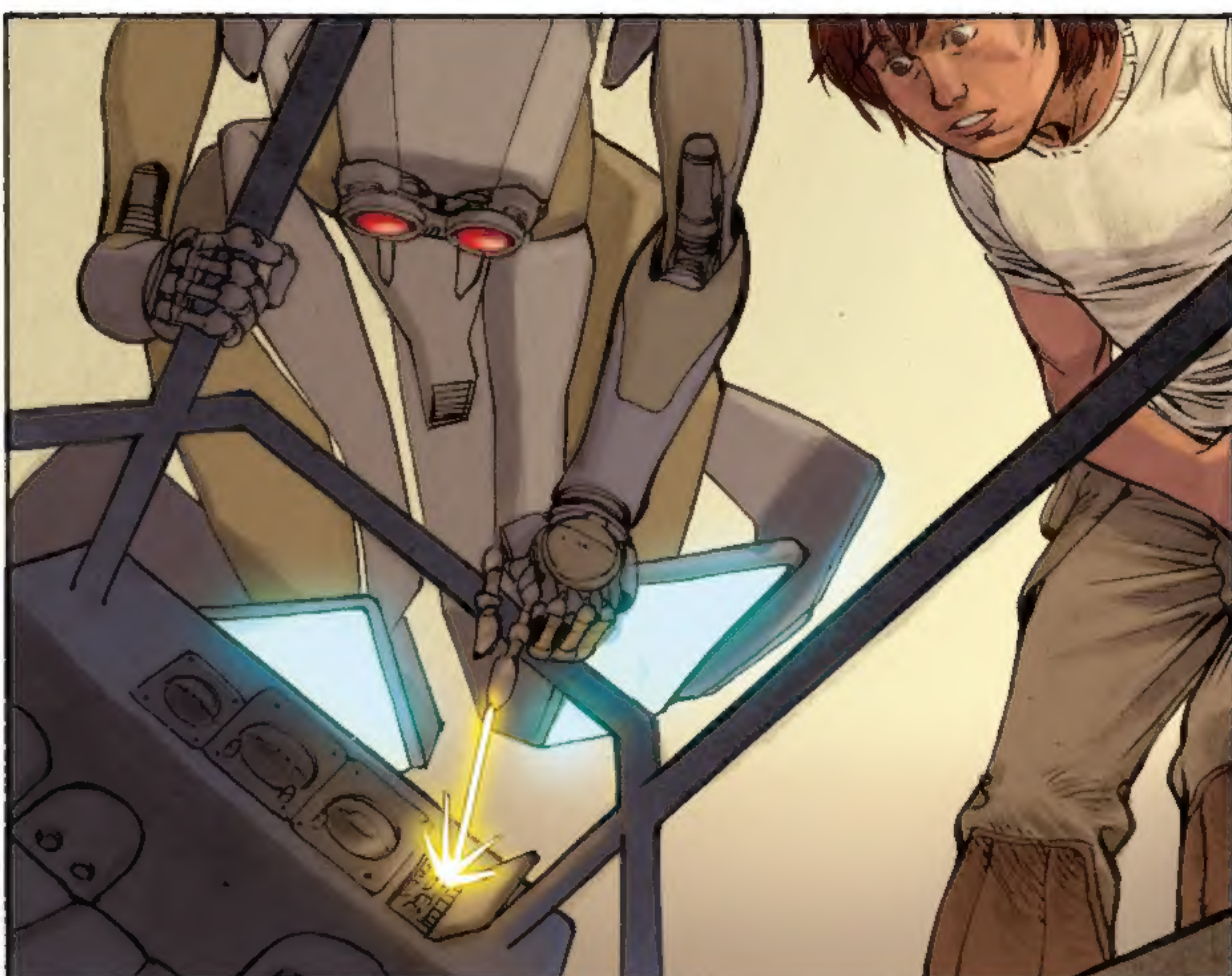
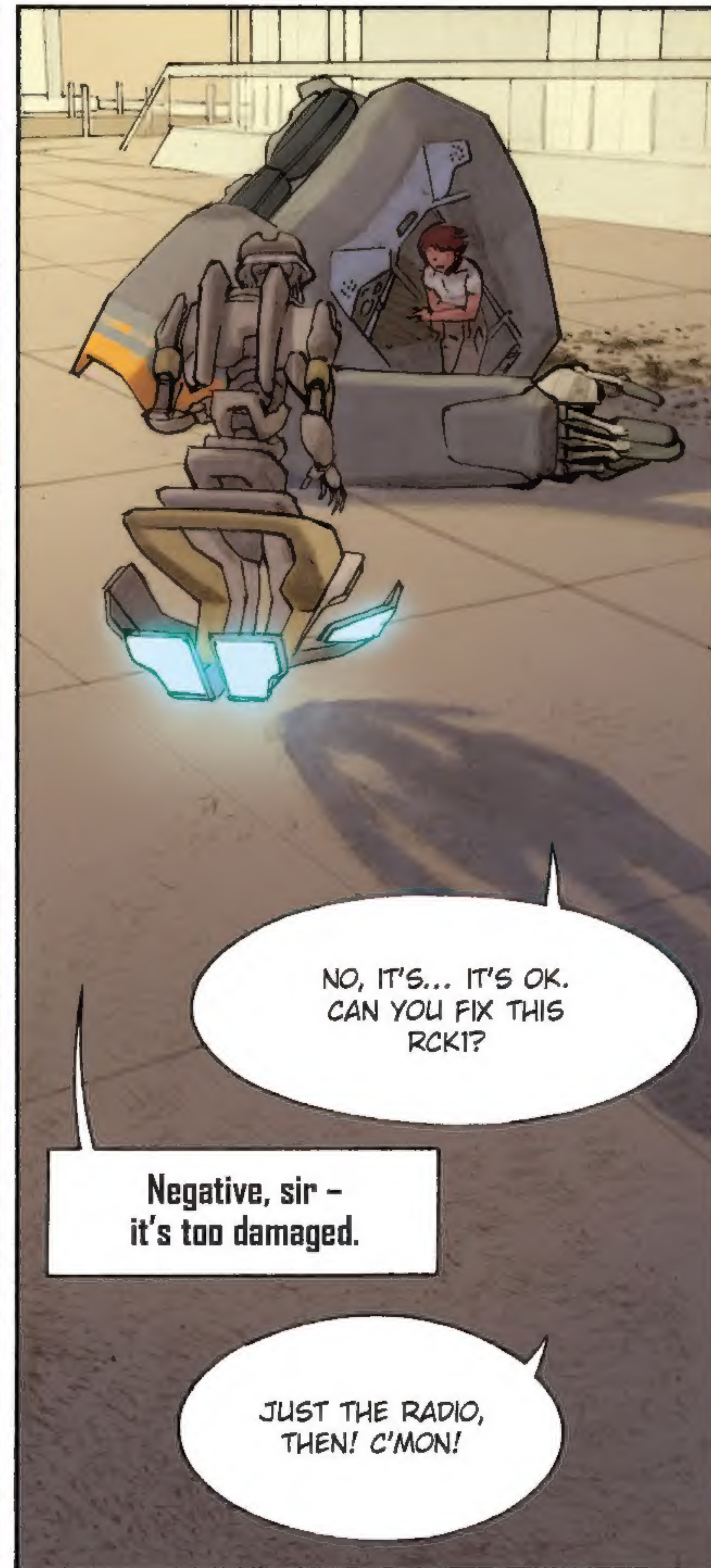
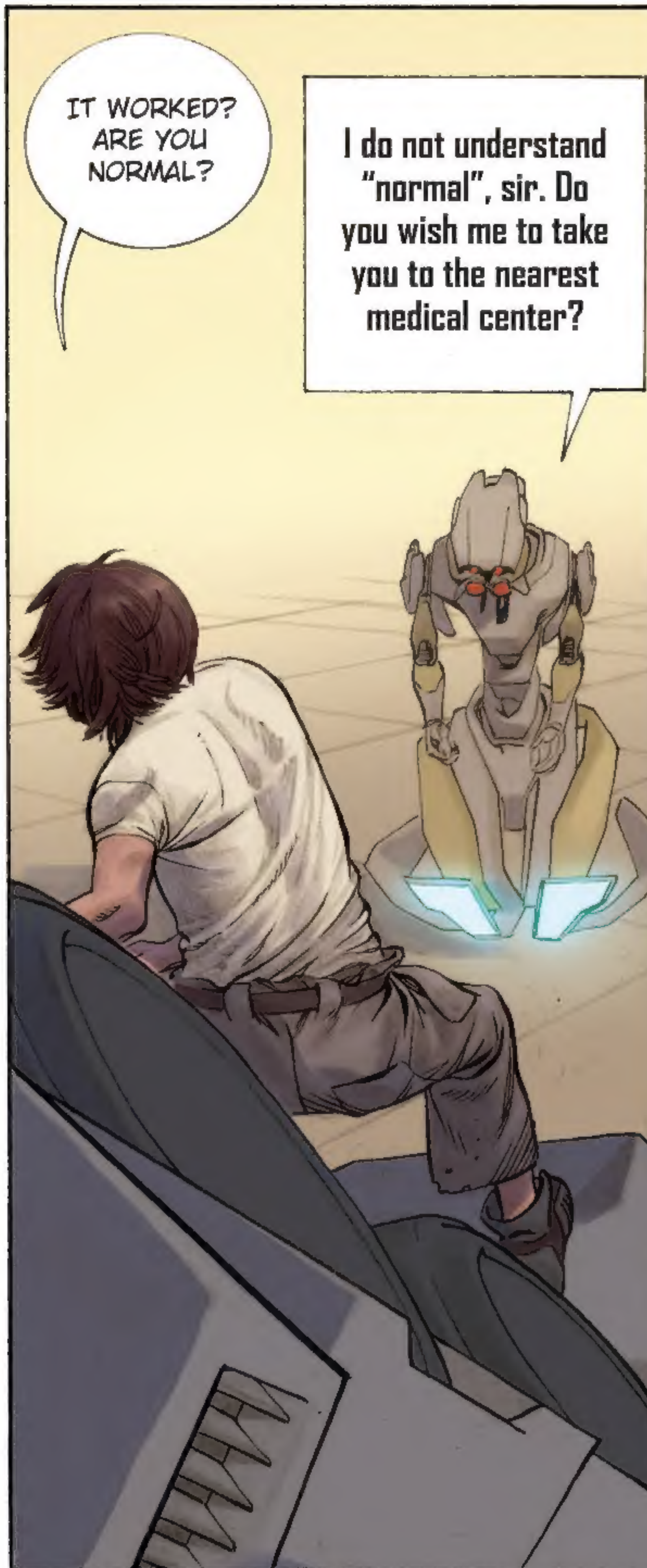
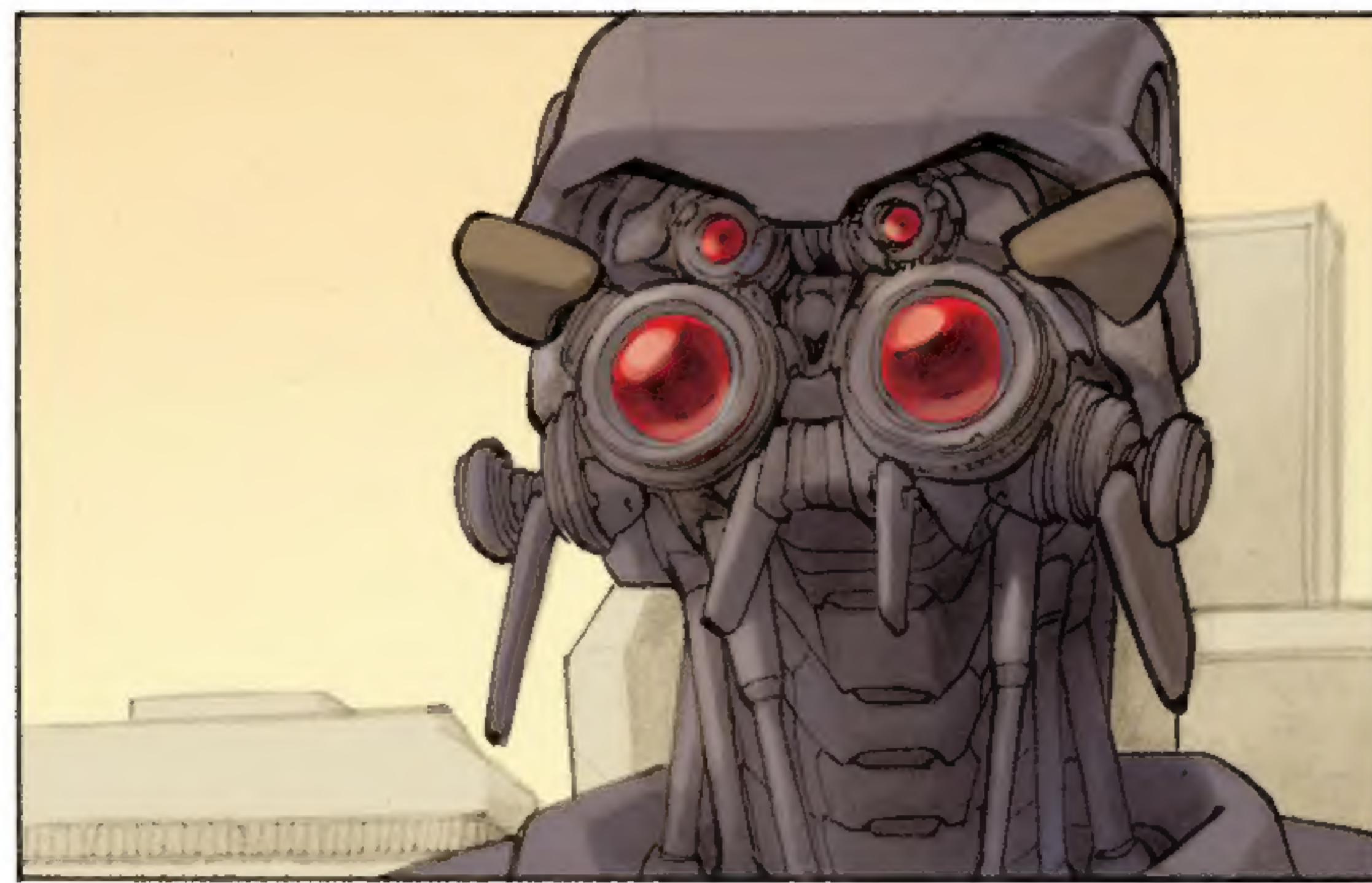
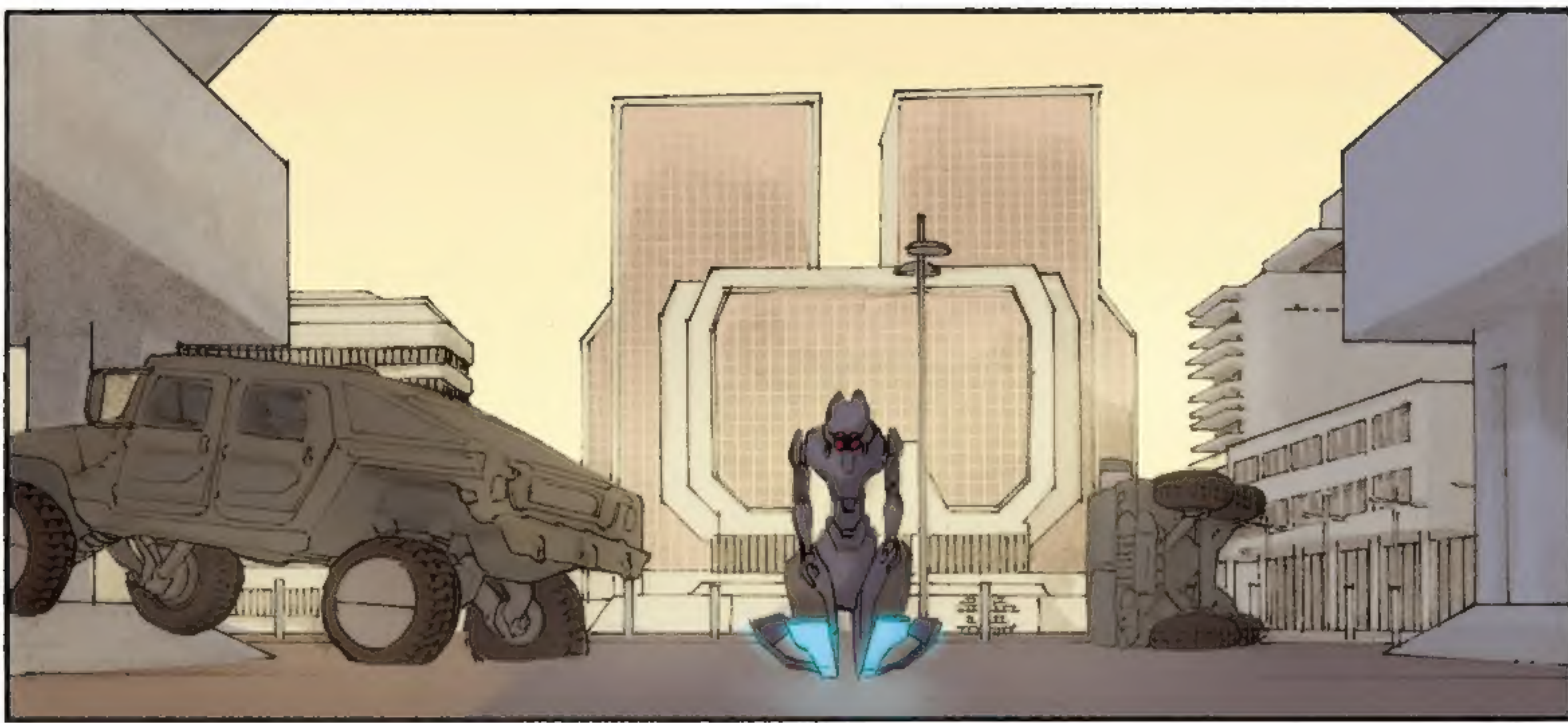


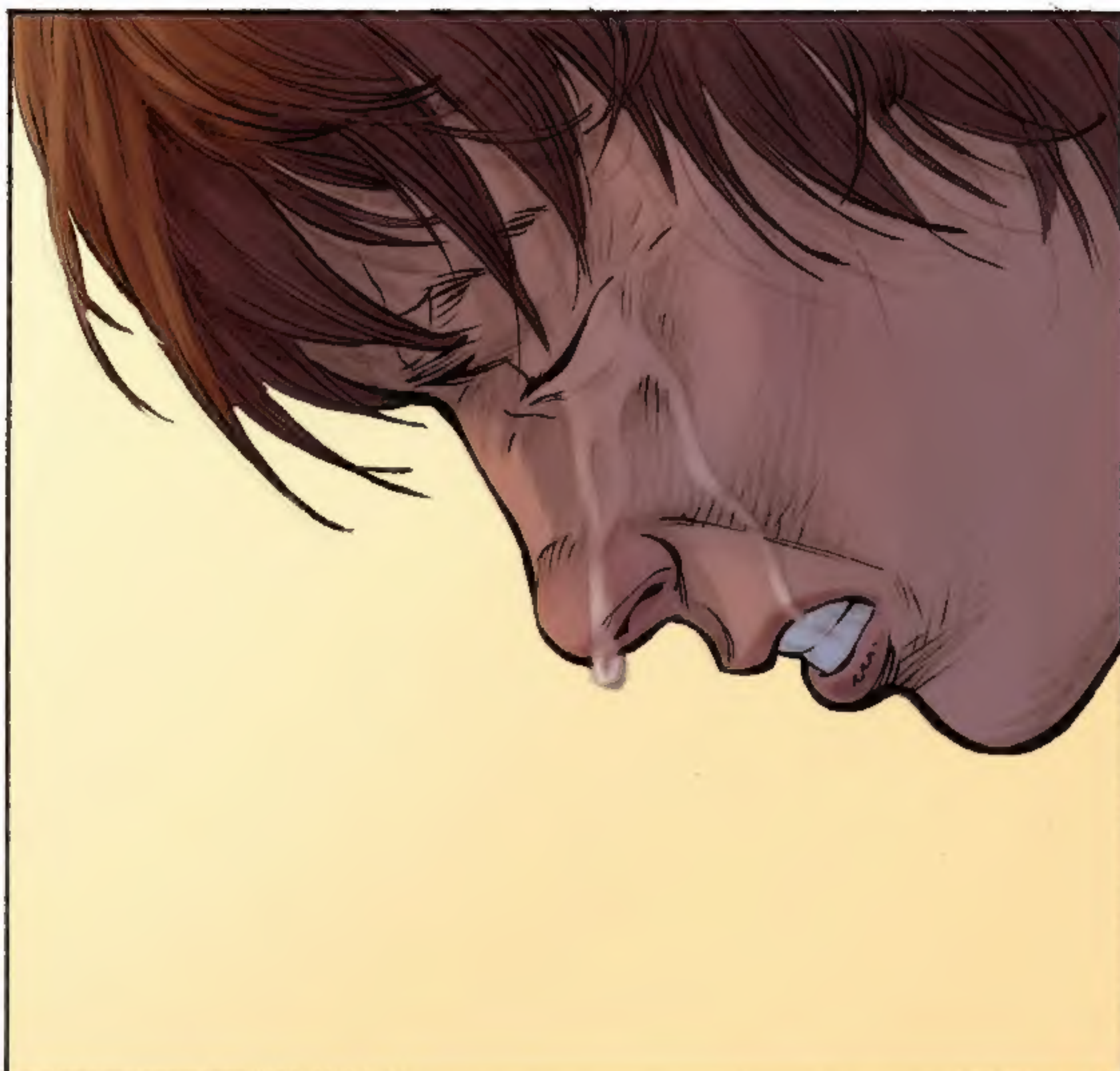
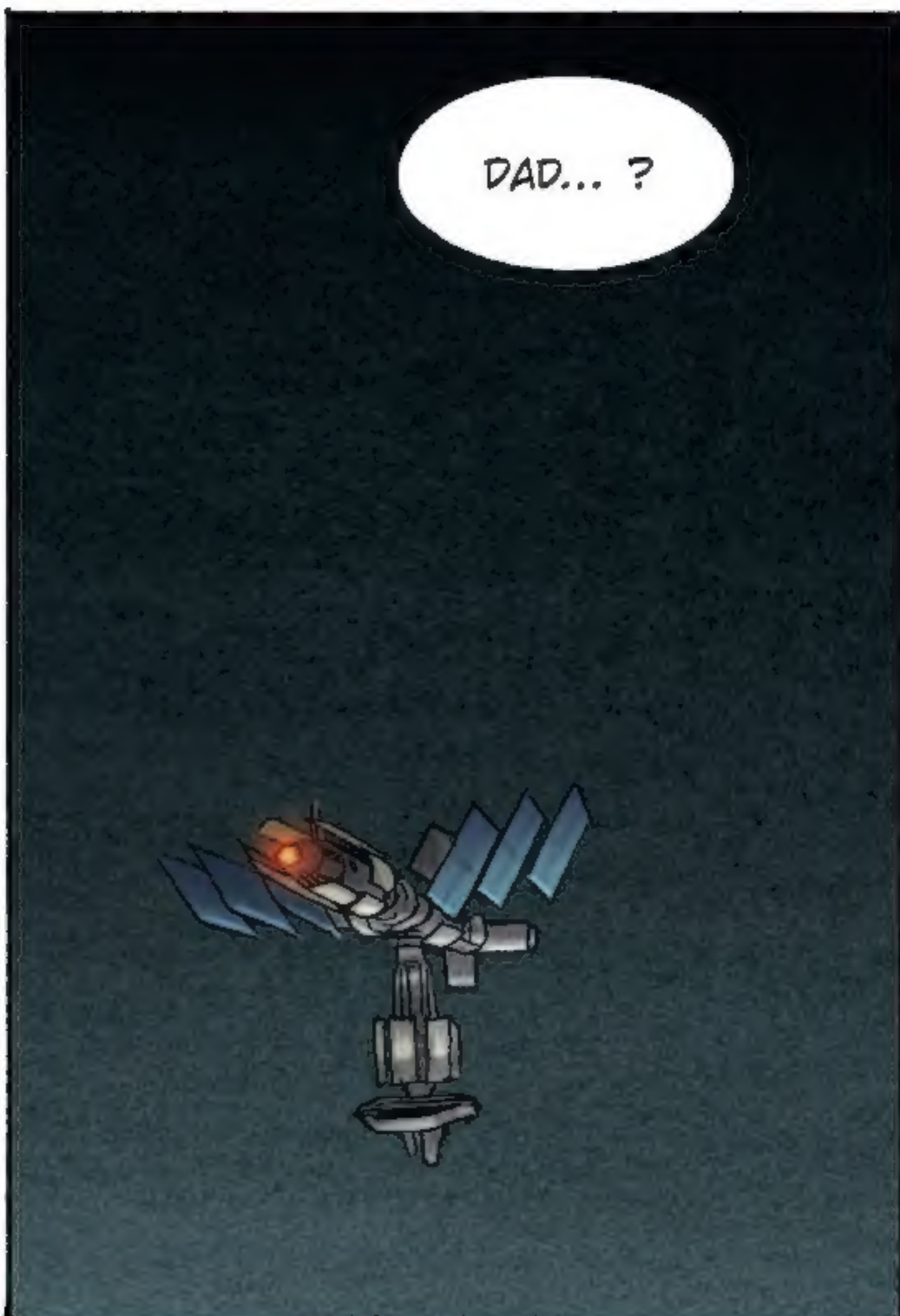
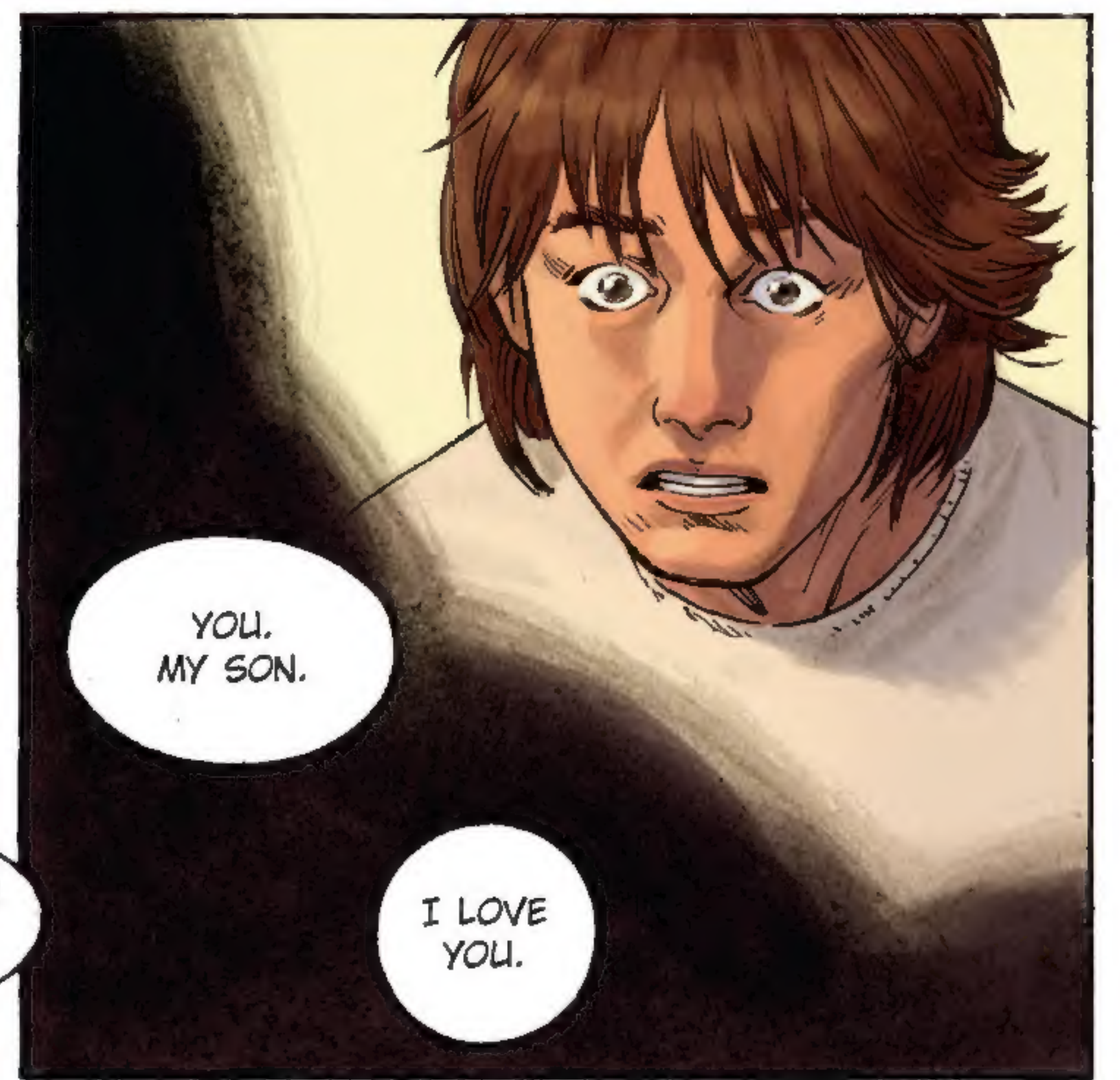








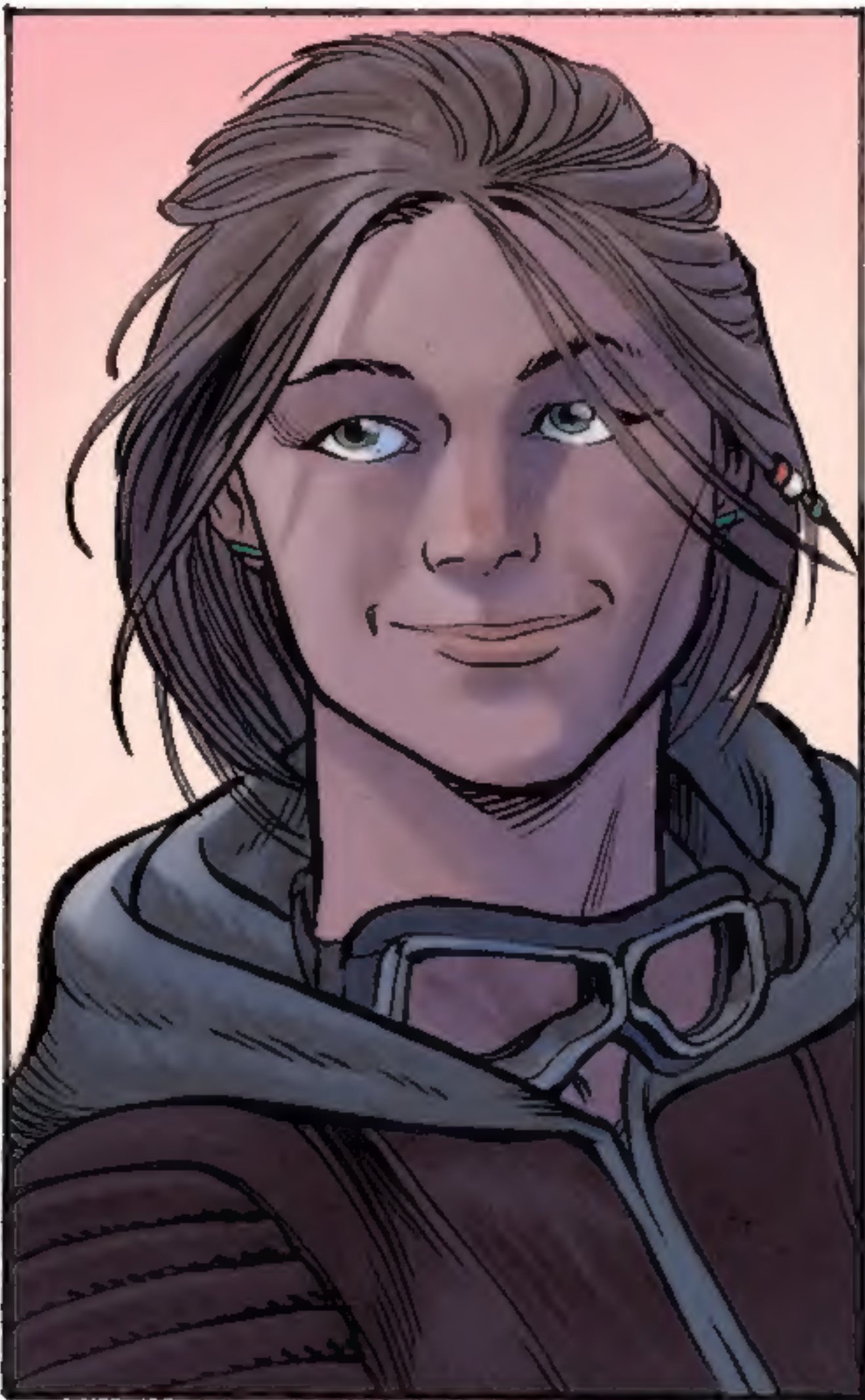
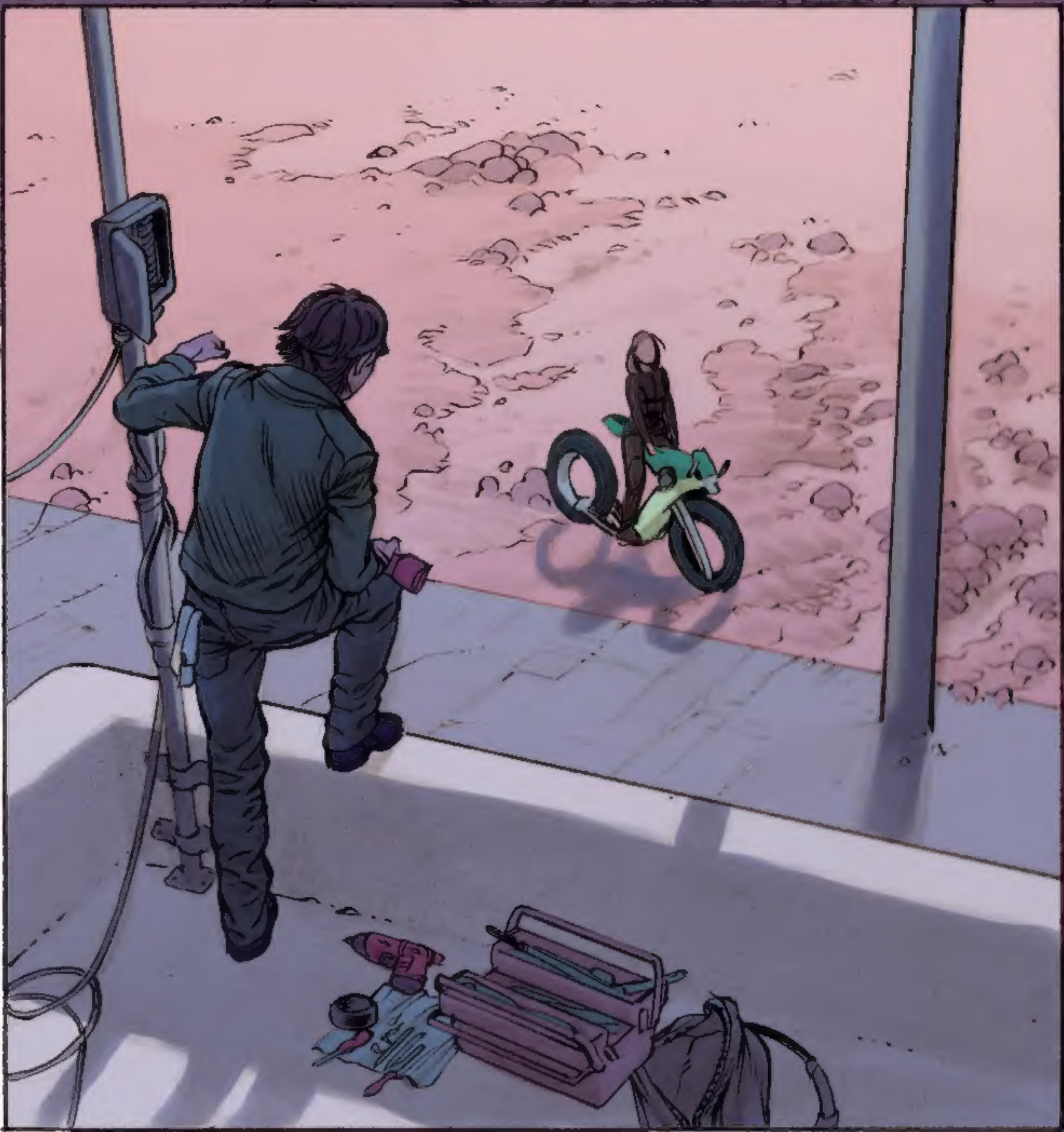




EIGHT YEARS
LATER.



STAN!



HELLO, MISS.



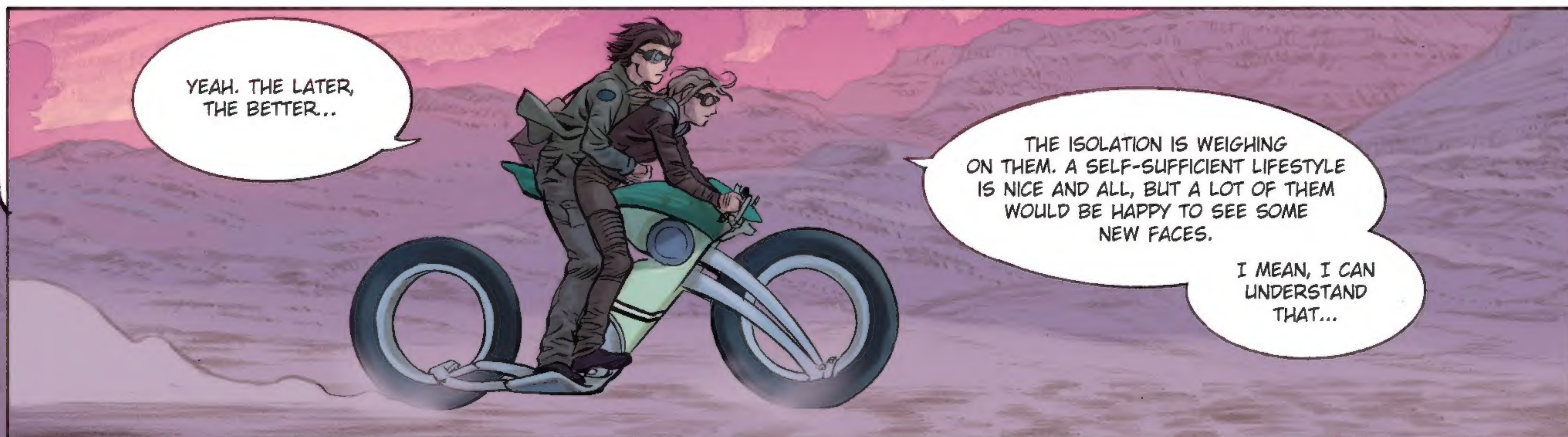
I'M DONE OUT
HERE. I HOPE THAT
THE SOLDERING WILL
HOLD, THIS TIME.

GOOD DAY AT
THE FARM?

MMM, YEAH.
MAGNUS AND ANNA
FOUGHT AGAIN, BUT
NO ONE REALLY
PAID THEM ANY
ATTENTION.



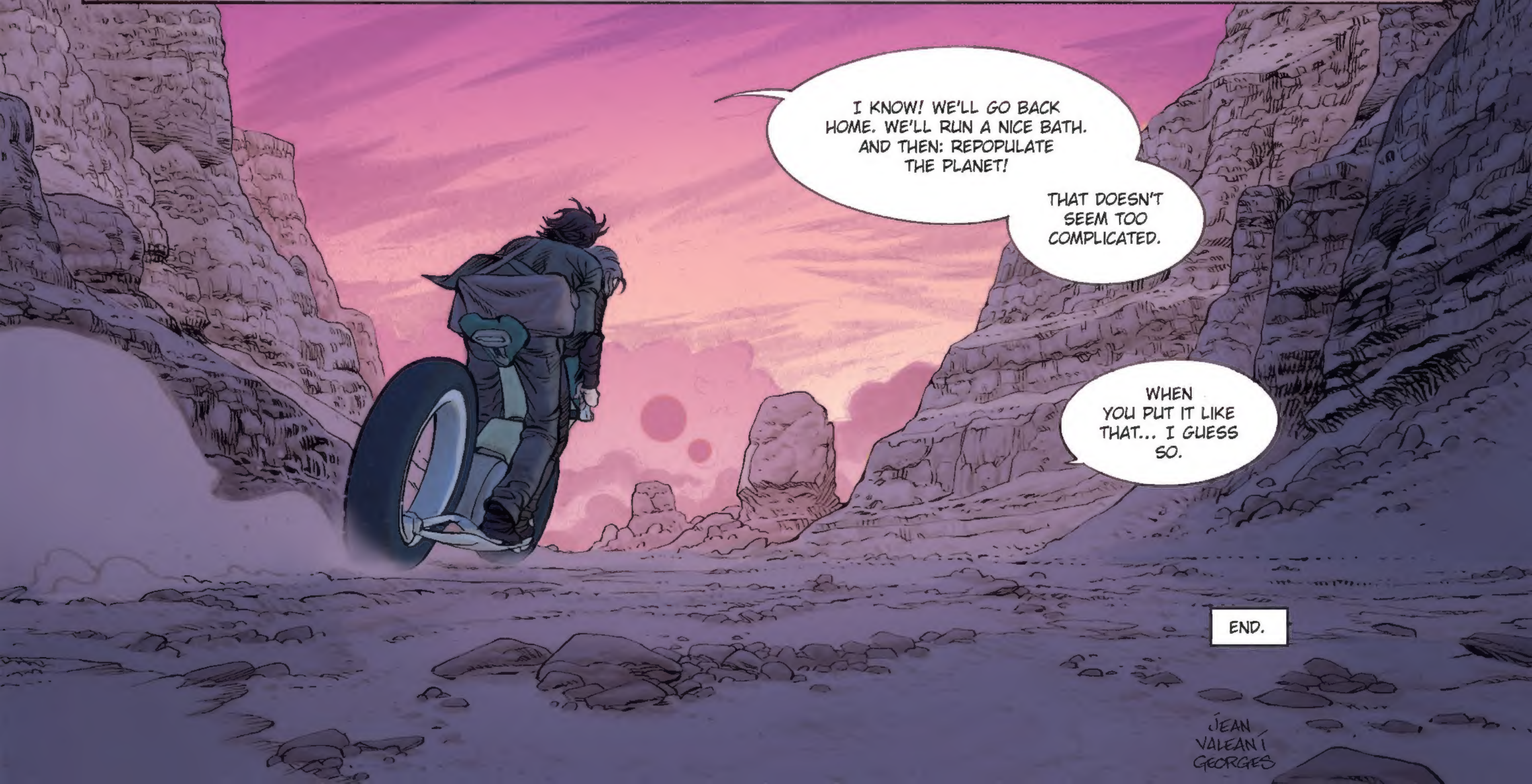
SOMEONE TOLD THEM
THAT WHEN H&J COMES BACK,
THEY'LL GET EVERYONE BACK
ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH.
THAT SEEMED TO SHUT
THEM UP.



YEAH. THE LATER,
THE BETTER...

THE ISOLATION IS WEIGHING
ON THEM. A SELF-SUFFICIENT LIFESTYLE
IS NICE AND ALL, BUT A LOT OF THEM
WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE SOME
NEW FACES.

I MEAN, I CAN
UNDERSTAND
THAT...



I KNOW! WE'LL GO BACK
HOME. WE'LL RUN A NICE BATH.
AND THEN: REPOPULATE
THE PLANET!

THAT DOESN'T
SEEM TOO
COMPLICATED.

WHEN
YOU PUT IT LIKE
THAT... I GUESS
SO.

END.